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HAPPINESS:

DISCOURSES DELIVERED AT GENEVA

BY

COUNT AGÉNOR DE GASPARIN.

462

TRANSLATED BY

MARY L. BOOTH,

TRANSLATOR OF DE GASPARIN'S, COCHIN'S, AND LABOULAYE'S
WORKS ON AMERICA, ETC.

With an Introduction

BY

REV. E. N. KIRK, D. D.



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

OUNT AGÉNOR DE GASPARIN has suddenly taken a high position before the people of England and America as the advocate of our Government and our cause. He has exhibited, with his countryman, De Tocqueville, a thoroughness of acquaintance with the history and nature of our republican life and institutions, which should put to shame the ignorance and prejudice of leaders of the press in the land of our fathers, — men whose language, literature, and religion are identical with our own, and whose political systems are most kindred with ours.

M. de Gasparin, in this little volume, now appears before the American people in a new light. It is not as a statesman, or a political philosopher, but as a moralist and Christian teacher, a disciple of the crucified Redeemer.

It is, therefore, thought desirable that a few words of introduction should accompany this volume, that the churches of America may give due welcome to our brother.

He was born at Orange, in July, 1810, and grew to manhood amidst the eminent men of France, under the dynasty of Louis Philippe. His father was a member of the Institute, and held an official position in two of the cabinets formed under that reign.

Born and trained amidst the temptations of affluence and the worldly influences of rank, being a gentleman of the court, and, while in his youth, at the head of a Bureau under his father, and afterwards associated with M. Guizot in his labor as Minister of Instruction, yet he early took his position as an humble follower of the Redeemer.

He imbibed the spirit of the gospel fully, and carried it into politics, legislation, administration, and local life. Wherever he went, his principles accompanied him, controlled him, and shaped his policy and his action. In great questions before the public he is always found on the side where Right is to be defended against Power. The

cause of the oppressed and the despised finds in him its champion; and for his principles he is now virtually an exile in Switzerland. Elected to the Chamber of Deputies when twenty-two years of age, he appeared on its floor the profound statesman, the brilliant orator, the high-minded patriot, and the loyal disciple of a divine Master. His first great plea, we believe, was in favor of thorough measures of justice and benevolence toward the enslaved Africans in the colonies of France. The principles and policy he maintained and recommended were worthy of the best days of a Christian empire. In an age of materialism he showed material interests to be infinitely inferior, even as instruments of national elevation, to moral principles. He fully believed as a statesman what he accepted as a Christian, that "righteousness exalteth a nation."

He wielded the weapons of logic, philosophy, sarcasm, and appeal, with immense power, when meeting the cant which our own ears are so accustomed to hear from the patrons of oppression.

As a citizen and as a legislator, he strove to bring the public conscience to demand justice and righteousness in public affairs, internal and inter-

national. He urged the government to establish reformatory institutions, or to incorporate them in their penal establishments; for French criminal law had known thus far only punishment as its end.

He was one of the deputation for the release of the Madiai, in whose behalf he aroused the sympathies of Protestant Christendom.

M. de Gasparin has been a diligent man, his published works having reached some twenty volumes, most of them, however, not large. They indicate a mind of profound thought, occupied supremely with questions which involve the most momentous interests of man and society. In all of them he takes the sublime position of a Christian philosopher, who regards man always in his highest relations, and as endowed with immortality of existence. The titles of some of his works will show the sphere in which his thoughts habitually move:—Christianity and Paganism; Christianity in the First Three Centuries; Christianity in the Fourth Century; Christianity in the Middle Ages; General Interests of French Protestantism after the Peace; or, Liberalism and the Eastern War (a masterly examination of the


subject of government); The Question of Neuchâtel (a vigorous plea for the rights of a people); Reply to Pastor A. Monod's pamphlet (on the question of the Union of Church and State); The Uprising of a Great People; America before Europe. Beside these he was from 1848 to 1858 the principal editor of the *Archives du Christianisme*, to which he has always been a voluminous contributor.

He has also written several works more directly theological and religious, such as Truth, Faith, Life; The Prospects of the Present; Happiness; in which he naturally exhibits his confidence in the Scriptures as an infallible revelation of truth, in Christ as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, in the Holy Spirit as the source of renewal and sanctification. His personal hope of eternal life is founded on the promises of God contained in his word; and his hopes of the regeneration and progress of human society rest on the power of the gospel of Christ to impart a rational, personal independence, the energy, substance, courage, and wisdom, by which alone society can safely pass through the tremendous ordeals which are yet between it and the expected golden age.

M. de Gasparin is, then, cordially commended to his American brethren as an eminent servant of our Lord and Saviour. This little work will speak for itself as worthy of the earnest perusal of every human being, as pointing the true way to the happiness we are all seeking.

E. N. K.

P R E F A C E.

HE welcome accorded to the first edition of these discourses gives me courage to-day to present them to a more extended public.

Let me be permitted, here, a single remark: these are *discourses*,* by no means a treatise, on happiness. I have neither been able nor willing to forget in writing what I had just spoken; now, speech has its privileges, which please accord to the author.

* These discourses were originally delivered at Geneva, by Count de Gasparin, before a Protestant congregation.

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I.

The Pursuit of Happiness.

The Pursuit of Happiness.



VANITY of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about toward the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full! unto the place whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things are full of labour; man can not utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

“I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. . .

“I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and behold, this is also vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I made me pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my

house ; also, I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. . . .

“ And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not from my heart any joy ; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour : and this was the portion of my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do : and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” — ECCLESIASTES I., II.

What do these mournful verses recount to us ? The *mad pursuit of happiness*, which man abandoned to himself seeks by every road without ever finding it. Such is the truly grave subject which is about to engross our attention. And this subject is but the introduction to a vaster problem to which I desire, dear friends, to devote these three discourses, — the problem of happiness.

Should we neglect to pause at such a subject, — to pause as long as is needed to render ourselves truly masters of it, we should not

seize the full beauty of the work of our God. He saves, he sanctifies, he renders us happy. Happiness, which is one of the phases of good, is one of the essential elements of the restoration wrought by God, for it can suffer neither sin nor sorrow to exist.

Those are false doctrines which affect to veil and despise this. Philosophies, and, after their example, amended systems of Christianity, have affected to rise above considerations so vulgar; but true Christianity is human,—human because it is divine. One of its claims to honor is that it summons us to happiness and invites us to desire it ardently.

Strange to say! of all its lessons, this is, perhaps, the least understood; of all the fruits of the gospel, there is none that ripens less frequently than happiness.

Why is this? In proportion, dear friends, as we advance, our surprise will continually diminish. We shall continually better perceive how high are the conditions of happiness; we shall see that the point in question here is,—I do not exaggerate,—the crown of the Christian edifice. Nothing is so sacred as happiness. Those who doubt it, those who think that such a problem is of the earth earthy, and awakens only thoughts of selfishness, those possess in no

degree either the understanding of our nature or that of the gospel.

But, to be in a position to judge of it, we must renounce hackneyed phrases and soporific commonplaces on the felicity of the children of God. Here, as every where, we reach the treasures, the rich veins, only by mining below the surface.

I have several reasons for treating at the present time the question of which I have just spoken. Never, perhaps, has the thirst for happiness broken forth more universally; it is the problem of our epoch, which seems to know no other. Yet, notwithstanding, never, perhaps, has the problem been more wretchedly propounded. We wish to be happy; but we set about it wrongly, and the false happiness which our generation pursues with mad desperation covers naught but profound wretchedness. We know it because we take part in it, who does not suffer, in some degree at least, from the prevailing epidemics? we know the paths to happiness which are to-day in vogue, — the unbridled love of pleasure, the maneuvers to obtain speedy fortunes, the scandal and folly of unbounded luxury, the ignoble reign of money.

This is not all. If public manners impose our subject upon us, events appear, also, to take it upon themselves to lead us to it. There is a sermon in events; so many chances of war and revolution, so many elements of insecurity are accumulating about us, that our trivial sources of happiness are in great danger, and a secret voice repeats to us all the melancholy and despairing words of the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

I.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS NATURAL AND LAWFUL.

AS I have already announced to you, I shall confine myself to-day, in this first discourse, to the consideration of one part of the subject — the *pursuit* of happiness. I shall show you, first, that this pursuit is lawful, that it responds to a profound need of our soul, a need approved by God ; next, that this pursuit is futile, and that without conversion the man who ardently aspires to be happy remains, and must remain, miserable.

That the thirst for happiness exists, you will not ask me to prove by long arguments. Let us examine our own hearts. We all aspire to joy, to peace, to repose. Now, repose is one of the essential significations of the word happiness. Even the most bustling toil only one day to repose ; labors in-doors, labors out-of-doors, labors of the body, labors of the mind, all are directed towards the same end — to obtain for ourselves and ours a sure and tranquil position, the right to peaceful enjoyment,

sheltered from the breathless anxieties and anguish of daily labor.

We wish this, and something more. However low may be our existing ambition for happiness, it is not wholly included, thank God ! in the ideas of security and repose. It goes further, whether we will or not, — to the enjoyments of the soul, and even to the aspirations of the conscience. To tell the truth, complete repose demands no less : it does not exist, so long as the moral equilibrium is interrupted within us ; and external peace can not suffice if internal peace be lacking. But I will not anticipate. I note this briefly, and proceed.

I have said that the pursuit of happiness is not only universal, but also lawful ; that it is not only a fact, but also a right.

How can we doubt it ? May not God desire the happiness of his creatures ? Does your mind form any idea whatsoever of God which does not contain this before all : He is good, therefore he desires to make happiness reign ? As to the God whom we know, the true God, the God of the Bible, the God who gives his own Son, I, doubtless, need not prove that he desires to render us happy, and that “ he

does not willingly afflict the children of men."

"His mercies are over all his works."

Man is born, therefore, to be happy. God desires that man should be happy. Yet, notwithstanding, man is not happy! There has been, therefore, great perturbation on earth. Should any one doubt the dogma of the fall, I would simply say to him, "Are you happy?" And on receiving his sad answer, I would add, "Do you conceive that God does not desire your happiness?"

If it is impossible that God should not desire our happiness, it is equally impossible that God should separate happiness from holiness. Happiness in sin, happiness in rebellion, happiness without God, happiness outside the conditions of the normal destiny, — this is radically inadmissible. And thus, as you see, the problem of happiness is linked with all other problems, or rather, all religious and moral problems are interwoven at the root; on digging a little way, we always discover unity. To tell the truth, there is but one question: We are dead, how shall we be revived? We are lost, how be saved? We are sinners, how become saints? We are unhappy, how attain happiness?

In other terms, God, having created responsible beings, and not machines, how shall we

remove the obstacle which their rebellion has placed between the designs of sanctification and felicity which Eternal Love had formed, and the accomplishment of these designs ?

Christianity, as you see, would not be human as it is, did it not accord to the great question of happiness the high place which belongs to it.

II.

UNHAPPINESS, ITS REALITY AND CAUSE.

WE have just verified the thirst for happiness and its lawfulness; let us now consider unhappiness and its reality. It is much greater, much more poignant than even those imagine who speak of it most strongly. A prolonged sigh, indescribably heart-rending and suffering, mounts from our earth, and is heard by the angels.

We describe the woes of humanity, we declaim on this theme; we fancy, perhaps, that we exaggerate. We always fall short of the truth. Is there not the unhappiness of the wretched and the unhappiness of the happy, the unhappiness of those who weep, and the unhappiness of those who laugh? By the side of the profound weariness of a sated heart that has essayed every thing, like the Preacher, and which has found deceit at the bottom of every thing, are there not the mad and appalling joys of the profligate, the detestable joys of the egotist? Are there not the host of indifferent

beings who pass through life without in any manner interrogating either their thought, their conscience, or their heart; who look no further, but, contenting themselves with trifling felicity, contrive not to fear death, and to enjoy life?

I can not tell what compassion fills my heart at the thought of such happy beings. And the unhappy, then, — those who have a conscience and know it, those who have a heart and feel it, those who endure trials from without, and know bitterness from within, who can exclaim, with Jeremiah, “Within, it is like death!” — shall we deny their unhappiness? In the face of these tears, these discouragements, this despair, these suicides, shall we smooth our brow and treat the sufferings of men as vain imaginations? Shall we preach to them resignation and contentment of mind? Shall we say to them, “Reason! be merry!”

God preserve me from holding such language! I have something else to do. We must meditate; we must commune with ourselves; we must go back to the source of the unhappiness of our race.

The first day of sin on earth was the first day of unhappiness. In that day the free choice of man introduced a profound disturbance into the moral order. Then, from this

poor planet, there began to rise toward heaven from the midst of the immensity of submissive and happy beings such a cry of distress that, on hearing it, one shudders, affrighted, and feels the need of reassuring his soul by contemplating in the recesses of the skies the voluntary victim who foreknew all that he might repair all, and who offered himself up before the foundation of the world.

You now, dear friends, obtain a glimpse of the office of suffering on earth. It comes like a divine messenger. The further we advance in our study the better we shall verify the admirable, providential, and merciful relation which our heavenly Father has established between suffering and sin. His name be praised!

In this is found our only chance of uprising. What would become of us if it were possible for us to be happy in disorder, happy far from God, happy in evil? It is necessary for our good; it is necessary that we should suffer so long as we have not returned to our lawful path, so long as we have not, by a new birth, regained our true nature. Were it otherwise, God would be neither a God of love nor a God of holiness.

Fathom, for an instant, this idea of God. Without conversion, it must be blotted out, or

it will crush us. If our God is a living and holy God, we can not be happy. All the illusions of joy—and they are great—are dissipated in the presence of Him who fathoms hearts.

Still more, they are dissipated in the face of the reclamations of our conscience. Something protests within us. Do what he will, the sinner needs not only to be reconciled with his God, but also with himself. If obedience be not his first inclination, it remains his first duty. He feels himself bound by it, he feels himself born for it, he feels himself called to something else than vain pleasures. He divines the lofty joys from which he is severed; he obtains a glimpse of the ideal from which he is separated by an abyss. The secret and continual accuser of himself, he finds unceasingly in his restless and discouraged soul a ground of incurable weariness. He desires what he does not possess; the infinite tempts him, and he falls back, bruised, to earth.

This is *suffering*, the fundamental suffering from which individual sufferings are detached; this is the sinister shadow that darkens all lives, even those which have succeeded in rendering themselves unconscious of it, in which all seems giddiness and frivolity. God, in his

love which calls us to him, makes us know the bitterness of exiles. Does this bitterness suffice to inspire us with the desire to return, the need of a country, homesickness? Alas! no. The sorrows of sin are necessary; they are never sufficient. Discouragements, sufferings, trials, do not only bring conversion, they also produce obduracy. "Hear," it is written, "hear ye the rod *and who hath appointed it.*" If it be not given us to see God in the trial, if the feeling of our culpability do not transform suffering into paternal chastisement, the suffering will irritate without humbling us; we shall be unhappy, we shall not be repentant. You know, like me, that despair which does not recoil upon ourselves, which teaches us not to pray, but to blaspheme.

III.

VAIN METHODS OF SEEKING HAPPINESS.

WE are only too well skilled, dear friends, in escaping the happiness which would cost us conversion. To what results does this lead? As we wish at the same time to dispense with God and to be happy, we undertake that pursuit so eloquently, so mournfully described in the verses which I have just quoted; then we try every thing, and find emptiness at the bottom of all. Then we come to exclaim with the Preacher, —

“What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? . . . All things are full of labour; man can not utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. . .

“And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven, which is sore travail. . .

“I said to my heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure. . .

“I gathered me also silver and gold.”

And all these are hollow, all these are vain ; labor as wisdom, mirth as money. After having had all these, after having exhausted all these, the Preacher rejects them with disgust. I thought to find happiness, and I have found weariness, disenchantment, and disgust. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity !

The experience of the Preacher, dear friends, is renewed unceasingly. Unceasingly humanity "labours," and unceasingly, also, it bemoans "all the labour which it taketh under the sun." False solutions of the problems of happiness have been lacking in no age, but in none, perhaps, has the solution been sought so low as in ours. Never, perhaps, despite certain aspirations to which I shall revert, has the eye been turned to such a degree earthward ; never have eating and drinking occupied to such a degree, not only the chief place, but sometimes the whole place. You know whether the attempt has succeeded, and what new discoveries of wretchedness man has attained on these diverse roads, all of which lead to death through discontent and weariness.

IV.

EPICURISM.

BUT I do not wish you to believe me on my word. Let us do like the Preacher: let us interrogate one after another every method, every system, every means of happiness without moral regeneration. Let us see what answer will be given us to-day by the pleasures of the Epicureans, the efforts of the Stoics, the doctrines of the philosophers, the beliefs of the semi-Christians. Let us see whether the problem of happiness can be resolved by external conditions, by the employment of life, by liberal occupations, by science, by patriotic devotion, by family affections, by the practice of beneficence. Let us see, in a word, whether the world, considered in its most frivolous and most serious acceptations, is capable of rendering us happy; whether it does not, on the contrary, dry up and transform into sources of poignant suffering even those legitimate joys which are found subject to its influence and included within its domain.

I look around me, I look within me, and

I see before every thing the habitual domination of Epicurism. By turns Epicureans, Stoics, and Quietists; by turns impelled to do nothing through indifference, to do every thing through pride, and to weary of every thing through mystical abstraction; it must, indeed, be acknowledged that the first of these successive impulses is the one which oftenest prevails in us. The fact is not glorious, but it is certain. We seek happiness in the first thing that comes, outside of all doctrine and all effort. We pretend to make our paradise here below, without its costing us too dearly. We make haste to gather up the gross joys which present themselves. We say, with the Preacher, "My soul, I will prove thee with mirth!"

Do not think, dear friends, that I declaim against mirth, or even against pleasure. In the service of Christ and with Christ, the converted soul has not only its joys, as we shall see, but it also enjoys in perfect innocence all the pleasures which God has strewn in its path. It is condemned neither to melancholy nor to prescribed austerity; it knows the pleasures of study, literature, art, the sight of the works of God, the ties of the heart, social relations. It is interdicted neither amusements nor laughter, — that honest, frank laughter, which is better

associated with true moral health, than the discreet smiles or systematic seriousness of the wearied formalist.

Nothing is so joyous, at the bottom, as an earnest life; nothing so sad as a joyous life which is nothing but joyous. Ah! "the soul proved with mirth" does not leave us in doubt as to the result of such an experience. How melancholy in the end are these false and unsatisfying joys! How true is it that he who drinks of this water "will still be dry"!

I have known many men, and of the number I have not discovered a single one that had found, in the habitual enjoyment of pleasures, even a brief illusion of happiness. Few miseries are comparable to those of the unfortunate who can say, with our sacred author, "Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not mine heart from any joy." Poor hearts, from whom no joy is withheld! True joy is unknown to them; they do not possess it, and, to crown their misery, they do not know how to desire it. Their sufferings seem to imprison them almost within the vulgar domain of their pleasures; if they sigh, it is because even these pleasures are sometimes lacking. "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled."

V.

STOICISM.

THIS, dear friends, is the most ignoble attempt at happiness ; we rise much higher in passing from the Epicureans to the Stoics. Among them, at least, is witnessed the reappearance of the great idea of duty ; every thing is no longer reduced to utility, immediate enjoyment. We feel relieved at again finding aspirations towards the ideal, towards lofty things, towards the beautiful, towards the good, towards true liberty. The manly doctrines of Stoicism, those doctrines which produced a Marcus Aurelius, are assuredly the most glorious effort ever attempted by the natural man to raise himself again alone.

Has he raised himself again ? If to Stoicism belongs the honor of better defining the terms of the problem, has it had the honor of better resolving it ? Assuredly, no. Our will does not accomplish such miracles by itself. I will have peace ! I will be at rest ! I will be happy !

I will ! And who speaks thus ? Who pretends to subdue the inclinations of the lower

nature? A poor creature, fallen and sinful, sold to evil, and who, so long as he counts only on his own strength, succeeds but in conquering sin by sin, passing from one sin to another, and replacing the low rebellion of vice by the haughty rebellion of pride.

Here pride is the basis of every thing. I will! I can! My will rejects suffering, therefore I will not suffer!

Alas! the will rejects suffering only by cutting off the affections. Stoics—and these exist in all times—Stoics make themselves insensible, impassible. Not to love, not to form attachments, not to regret; to dry up the heart, since the heart is wrung by pain, and we continue to suffer as long as it is living; to give the empire to a cold and vainglorious reason—such are the means which they employ. It is thus that they attain to a poor, very poor illusion of happiness, a cold and dead happiness, a negative happiness, a happiness by means of mutilation, and which produces the effect on us of unhappiness itself, however little we may know the ideal of the gospel, which develops, instead of dwindling, which warms, instead of freezing, which wishes us more vital, more loving, more passionate, more deeply implicated in all noble struggles, more accessible to all noble

sorrows, more complete, in a word, in order to render us more happy.

False wisdom has long since adopted other methods. This it is which says to man, "Hope little, so as not to be disappointed."* But the gospel says to him, Hope much; we never hope enough; our fidelity is in proportion to our hope. False wisdom again commands us to proscribe the imagination and suppress the passions, and counsels us not to be moved, to forget, "to sponge up life as fast as it flows by," and to cling to the Italian proverb, "It is better to be sitting than standing, lying than sitting, and dead than lying." But the gospel, instead of impelling us towards death, commands us to live, to live sturdily and valiantly; it knows that life is good for all, and that there is no life worthy of the name without ardent emotions, without imagination, and, I do not fear to use the word again, without passions. Seek a great character that has been in no way impassioned! As well extinguish our fire in order to distill, as to extinguish the inner fire

* "Hope," wrote Chamfort, "is a quack that continually deceives us; and my happiness did not begin till I had lost it. I would willingly write on the gate of Paradise what Dante placed on that of hell:—

"*Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch' entrate.*"

Leave Hope behind, all ye who enter here.

to accomplish our work as men and Christians here on earth. This work is immense; it exacts energy and fire; the violent alone carry the kingdom of heaven by storm; and if we were to examine them more closely, we should oftener find a chimerical or romantic phase in great characters among the true servants of God, than an inert thought and a cold heart.

It was incumbent on me, dear friends, to make this observation, in order to justify my judgment on the Stoics, and the kind of happiness which it is permitted them to attain. I do not dispute, as you have seen, the remarkable features among them. Their manly attempts to realize certain virtues, their patience, their firmness, their resignation, deserve to excite a feeling quite different from that of disdain. But whatever may be thought of their labor, we must, at least, admit one thing: it does not end in happiness.

Stoical resignation is not filial abandonment to the hand of God. Those celebrated words, in which the Stoics, essaying to deceive themselves, fling defiance to pain, are of hollow sound. Thou hast denied pain, Cato; thou hast read the Phædo while tearing out thy entrails. But, in denying pain, hast thou destroyed it? Ah! who could measure what filled thy soul,

thy indignant, despairing soul, thy soul submerged by the ills of life, and opening for itself a bloody refuge in the bosom of death? Thy act refutes thy doctrine. What a strange argument is suicide to prove that there is no pain!

VI.

PHILOSOPHY — DEISM — PANTHEISM — ATHEISM.

SOME one says, "Reason left to itself soon wearies of its pride; one may be a philosopher to the public, he is always a man to himself." This remark does not only confound the involuntary falsehoods of stoicism; it strips bare the illusions of all systems of philosophy. In the question of happiness, which occupies our attention, it will suffice us to go to man, to miserable, suffering man, deprived of true blessings and true consolations; he will always tell us what we are to think of scholars.

Philosophers have indeed had good opportunities since the gospel appeared on earth. This gospel, which puts a hundred times as many truths in the brains of ignorant boors as scholars possessed in the times of Aristotle, furnishes to its enemies themselves a common fund of healthy and profound ideas which, without it, they would have never suspected. They attack the gospel, and they live by it. They build their natural religions with the material furnished them by revealed religion.

Yet, notwithstanding, enriched as they are, perhaps without their knowledge, by its spoils, their poverty is still great. What they put aside, or rather ignore, of the gospel, what it is impossible for them to comprehend in a philosophical point of view, is precisely the essential part,—that which renews the soul, that which gives happiness. Seek in the systems of philosophy, even in those since the advent of the gospel,—seek the living God, the fall, redemption, love, true holiness !

I do not know, dear friends, whether you have visited, like me, the desolate regions of “the good, the beautiful, and the true,” whether you have essayed the methods of reformation which Franklin attributes to his Poor Richard, whether you have contemplated with Rousseau the splendors of the state of nature opposed to the state of society, whether you have closely examined the arid Confession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar, or whether, descending lower, you have asked what kind of felicity is encountered in the kingdom of the God of upright men. Deism,* under all its forms, the most spiritual

* I condemn systems ; I do not condemn individuals. If it is certain that no Deism gives happiness, I am far from pretending that

and the grossest, always leaves us distracted before ourselves, our sins, our miseries, and our sorrows, scarcely perceiving in the distance, in the solitary heaven,

A useless God, who desires no altars.

With Pantheism it is still worse. Here is Man in the face of the Great Whole, of Nature,

no Deist has been happy. It is necessary to make allowance for human inconsistency. I know of nothing more remarkable in this relation than the softened Deism of the Unitarian, Channing. The declared adversary of doctrines without which faith has no longer an existence, he seems, notwithstanding, to submit to and love the influence of the gospel. We feel that he has not breathed the Christian atmosphere of the United States in vain. He rejects and accepts; he denies by intellect, and almost affirms by heart; he contemplates the divinity of Jesus Christ perhaps more than he believes. A single and dangerous example, among all others, of a doctrinal incredulity which has the air of not entirely excluding practical adhesion, and which, in leaving room for vast hopes, opens vistas of progress, of beneficent activity, of courageous and devoted labor, at the end of which we obtain a glimpse of God and, consequently, of happiness! When Channing is in question let us refrain from judging. Who can tell how far the internal contradictions of our nature and the unseen work of grace may sometimes go? When Unitarianism and Deism are in question, let us unhesitatingly judge a system as arid as impotent. The system is vanishing; it is vanishing without having produced any fruit; its golden legend will comprise but a single saint. Channing remains, therefore, a brilliant and engaging anomaly. Channing is not a system; he is a person, an individual. The most personal of persons, the most individual of individuals, Channing deduces no consequence. It is affirmed that he possessed true happiness; words of his are quoted, which celebrate life as a blessing whose value increases daily. "The longer I live," wrote he, shortly before his death, "the more clearly I see the light piercing through the clouds. I am sure that the sun is above there." There is something else here, I am convinced, than

of God, if we will, but an impersonal God, who neither hears, nor acts, nor grants. No more prayers, no more providences; fatal forces; an abyss in which are swallowed up conscience, liberty, immortality, and (need I say?) happiness!

Man ceases to be the creature of God to become his manifestation. He becomes his own end, his veritable sovereign, his supreme law, and, consequently, also his supreme resource. Adieu to duty, to sorrow for sin, to efforts toward good, to progress, to generous hopes, to lofty aspirations! All that constituted the dignity of our destiny has disappeared; we have the honor to figure under the title of wheels in the mechanism, without heart or entrails, which utilize and grind the universality of beings in order to produce universal history.

It would seem impossible to descend lower in the scale of degradation and unhappiness.

that vague serenity which, as all know, crowns the existence of the sage.

Nothing disturbs his end; it is the close of a summer's day. Channing experienced feelings which La Fontaine did not even suspect; but, I repeat, Channing is an exception. From such a Deist to Deism, the history of which is certainly well known, no one has a right to draw any conclusions.

Atheism, properly called, is nevertheless yet a degree below Pantheism. One must have an appalling courage, or rather a fearfully diseased heart, to seek his refuge in nothingness. Hedged in on either side, between the fear of being converted and the fear of being judged, man attempts to contradict all the feelings of his soul, all the evidences of his mind, all the protests of his conscience; he seeks, he seems sometimes to attain, the belief that God is an idle word, that chance reigns, that matter is the only thing here below, that there are neither hopes nor fears to be conceived beyond the tomb, that after death all is dead.

Let us not disguise it; this is the *ideal* of many. Without precisely stating these things in set terms, without arriving at a full conviction, which is not possible, they succeed in diverting their thoughts from every thing that is not present life or material fact; by degrees the thought of a God, of a life to come, of a life of the soul, becomes so indistinct that they no longer take it into account. In the presence of these formidable problems it is easier, perhaps, to deny than to doubt. We deny, or at least, forget. Our natural cowardice impels us much rather toward that inert negation of forgetfulness

which is at the bottom of practical Atheism than toward the tortures of serious doubt.

“Yes, the indifferent are but Atheists;
They would sleep no longer, should they doubt a single day.”

The poet who writes this may speak from experience. He has measured, compared the miseries of both conditions. Horrible miseries, dear friends, horrible above all when we have succeeded in veiling them, when man has succeeded in living on earth as if there were no God on high! Then tell me what are his joys! tell me what are his sorrows! tell me what we are to prune, to cut off, to suppress within us! what punishment the thoughts, the hopes, the affections, the whole human destiny must endure for it to be satisfied with the few days that we pass here on earth!

On the whole, I prefer the lot of those who do not slumber, because they doubt. I prefer it because it is noble, because it does not close the avenues of heaven, because it preserves the chances of a return to God; but if it be higher, how miserable is it and full of anguish!

Such souls have lost false peace, but have not yet regained true peace; they propound

all questions without resolving any ; they stand at the door, restless, agitated, struggling with fearful presentiments, bending their ear, as it were, to the mysterious sounds from another existence.

To some, to many, I hope, these moral sufferings are the forerunners of conversion and happiness. Notwithstanding, though it is written that "he who seeks shall find," it remains no less certain that the spirit of doubt is not always — far from it — the spirit of investigation. There is a sterile doubt, a doubt wherein the feeling of sin has no part, and which tortures the mind without disquieting the conscience. Then appear great visions, — God, death, judgment, eternity, and, by the side of each vision, a *perhaps* ! Ah ! I apprehend that this must drive away slumber.

VII.

FORMALISM — ASCETICISM — MYSTICISM.

THE instinct which makes so many, if not theoretical, at least practical, Atheists, is not, therefore, devoid of justice. Those who succeed by this means in ridding themselves in point of fact of the thought of God, have well understood that secret voice which tells us that we can not reconcile rebellion against God with happiness. As they do not wish to renounce rebellion, that is, to be born again, as neither do they wish to be unhappy, but one resource remains to them, — to efface God, to put aside importunate ideas of sin, righteousness, and judgment. They strive in this manner to realize a sort of negative felicity, which you will call with me the light of misery.

But do not other less extreme means of tranquilizing themselves with respect to the future exist? While avoiding conversion, could not men, also, avoid suppressing God like the Atheist and Pantheist, or exiling him into the inac-

cessible regions of philosophic Deism? Is there no middle term? Putting aside at once the excesses of irreligion and those of a too serious religion, have not men of sense the resource of adopting and practicing Christianity as it exists in their time and country? In this way, indeed, in the bosom of these common beliefs, taking care not to examine them too closely, nor to give too much importance to questions that may arise, taking their convictions ready-made from the hands of their fathers, fellow-citizens, and spiritual guides, they obtain that calmness without which there is no happiness. Look at them; they believe what others believe, they do what others do, they follow with the world the highway that leads to heaven.

To this I have but one objection to oppose: no highway has ever led to heaven. "Narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it." Few find it, because the point in question is to struggle against one's self, to die to one's self, to renounce one's self,—in other words, to be converted. Few find it, because the point in question is to attain joy by passing through sorrow,—through the bitter sorrow of sin, through the pangs of travail!

Ah! let us distrust these easy methods which preserve us at the same time from the judg-

ments of the holy God and the pangs of regeneration. It would be convenient, indeed, to save ourselves by reciting, or, if you like, adopting a few formulas, by accepting a few dogmas, by participating in a few acts of worship, by listening to faithful sermons, by being softened on hearing certain words, by employing with exactness — and I add with sincerity — the line of conduct designed to set us right both during life and at the hour of death.

Not only is such security ill-founded, not only does it pave the way for fearful deception, but it does not even attain its end on earth; it makes none happy, no, not a single one.

None are happy on earth but those who are happy in heaven. None are happy but those who have been unhappy; who have suffered the miseries of condemnation and uprising. None are happy but the reconciled, the pardoned, the renewed. Outside of these, the pursuit of happiness is, doubtless, the universal anxiety, but what are its results?

If the answer to this question seems doubtful to you, I ask you to listen to the sounds that arise every day, and every moment of the day, from among the multitudes that are living in a stereotyped faith. Hereditary faith render men happy! Alas! I hear nothing but blas-

phemies and murmurs break forth on all sides. What is every where around us, if not discontent? These societies formed by so facile a religion are feverish, tossing uneasily from side to side, seeking rest and finding none.

You know, dear friends, whether I exaggerate. You are my witnesses that the malady exists, that the pretended remedy has cured no one, and that, if man wishes to discover happiness, he must address himself elsewhere.

And man, indeed, has made other attempts. Resolved to avoid conversion, he has tried every thing except the final means. We have witnessed the birth of the religious tendencies which replace regeneration either by the method of the ascetics or by that of the mystics. The former, dualists without knowing it, see evil in matter; it is against matter, and all that belongs to it, that their blows are directed. They cut off the most lawful enjoyments, they suppress the most precious affections, they diminish and impoverish life; new Stoics, under a Christian guise, they make it their business to know nothing or do nothing on earth which in anywise concerns the things of earth. Do you think, dear friends, that they are happy? They would not be completely so, even if they

had given their hearts to God, for they would be so in a different manner from what God desires, — that God who desires us to be happy through him, doubtless, but happy with family, with labor, with affections, with duties, with development and activity in every direction. What must it be if, as we have too much reason to fear, the ascetic soul has mistaken appearances for reality, the combat against matter for the combat against sin, mutilation for conversion !

This fatal error also threatens those who seek happiness by the path of mysticism ; who rest their security on emotions, feelings, a pretended union with God. The more or less ecstatic state of abstraction is not as holy as some would have us believe. It is often the great exemption from conversion. From the first moment, the man loses himself in God, and avoids passing through the humiliation of sin, condemnation, and conflict. More than the law condemns us, more than the authority of the Scriptures constrains us ; we carry every thing within ourselves, — our revelation and our salvation.

Such is the highest point, perhaps, which the unconverted soul can attain. And here, also, it is most tempted to believe itself in possession of a veritable, lofty, indestructible happiness.

Only — and here is revealed the common feature of those doctrines which exaggerate certain phases of the gospel in order to show its essential principle — the illusions of happiness which are obtained in this manner are bought at the price of a diminution of the human destiny, a veritable moral atrophy. Asceticism lessens the life, mysticism sacrifices the individual. Our self evaporates, and with it our responsibility. For the realities of our terrestrial vocation are substituted soft languors, a sanctimonious sentimentalism, a factitious exaltation which excites the imagination without strongly interesting the conscience. No, no ; this is not healthy and simple felicity, the secret need of which torments our souls, and which God has promised to his children.

VIII.

RICHES.

IN that breathless pursuit of happiness which now forms the subject of our study, it is incumbent on me to say that philosophies and beliefs have, doubtless, to bear their part; usually, however, men do not go back as far as these, but demand happiness of external conditions or the arrangement of life.

To speak plainly, to many the happy are the rich. Have a secure income, and if to this advantage you join good health, position, and influence, you will have attained the summit of human felicity. I am ashamed to say it, but it is so.

I do not wish, dear friends, either to repeat the commonplaces of such a subject or to avoid the delicate part of it. I am not the one to say to the poor, the sick, and the unfortunate, "Your trials are only fancied." There are indeed poignant anxieties, physical and moral sufferings, complications of misery, the heart-rending bitterness of which can not be denied.

Yet how false, thank God, is that classification of the happy and the unhappy which rests on rank, fortune, and health! It is within and not without that we are to seek the conditions of happiness. Within, things which are not visible, which often we do not and can not tell, fix our true condition.

We know, first, that the consequences of war are every where, among the rich as among the poor. We can not have looked very closely to imagine that in some households there are neither solitudes, nor labor, nor difficulties unceasingly springing up anew, nor distracting problems, nor heavy responsibilities, nor conflict, nor weariness. This is the common lot; and faith itself, which alone lightens such a burden, never delivers us from it entirely. The weight of life makes itself every where felt; God has thus ordered it.

But he has ordered at the same time that his redeemed shall find in communion with him an inexhaustible source of strength and peace. Here is the great difference,—here and nowhere else.

You have all seen those happy men of the world who have naught but rank, fortune, and health, inspire but one feeling,—that of profound contempt. What say the emptiness of

their lives, the vanity of their joys, the ennui, the overwhelming ennui, that creeps beneath their pleasures? "The rich man," it is said, "shall fade away in his ways." A terrible declaration, which is daily accomplished before our eyes. Blight goes in the way of riches without Christ; it advances; it spreads; it overtakes every art and every plan. The burning wind of the East spares nothing; there is no more verdant foliage, only dry leaves and stubble. Ah! it is in vain to strive, dear friends; the soul knows no change. It has needs which neither money, nor position, nor physical comfort can satisfy. Under the roof of opulence are often, too often, needy souls, souls dying of hunger.

Visit, on the contrary, the poor hut, where every thing seems lacking, where the father is sick, where the children are in rags; if the Lord Jesus has entered there, if the spirit of prayer and faith dwells there, if a ray of the gospel shines there, oh! then all is resplendent with golden light, — then are found trust, love, songs of praise and thanksgivings.

Once more, do not ascribe to me a thought that is not mine. Anguish is anguish, and sorrow, sorrow; and although essential happiness does not reside in our external circumstances,

I am far from saying that the painful aspect of these circumstances ought to excite our joy.

I do not even say this in the point of view of our spiritual interests. If the temptations of the rich are the most dangerous (and who can doubt it after the declaration of Jesus Christ?), if they have to put themselves on their guard against melancholy flatteries, against deplorable illusions, against the pride that wars on God and his gifts, and shuts itself up in its earthly possessions as in an impregnable fortress; if they are easily led to establish themselves, to take root on earth, to feel no longer in any degree the sadness of living alienated from their own country, of becoming their own center, of foolishly confounding their fortune with their person, of esteeming themselves over much, and setting themselves up as superior beings; if property is too often an obstacle to humility, repentance, and conversion; if it hinders us from feeling our own poverty and receiving the gospel which is "announced to the poor;" if, as some honest men have more difficulty than others in feeling their moral wretchedness, the happy have more difficulty than others in feeling the need of true riches; if they are called more than others to put to themselves the question, "Shall I not have re-

ceived *my goods* here below?" it is equally true that poverty has its perils, less, doubtless, but real. It brings forth under another form those tares, those anxieties of life, which may choke the good seed. Sometimes it exposes youth to the contagion of bad examples and gross habits. Sometimes it embitters men and turns them aside from the gospel. The afflicted will tell us (they have told it to me) that in their state of utter despondency, they are fit for nothing; that one must be tranquil to think of God; that it is very easy for us to attend to our souls, but that those who have to struggle against the material difficulties of life have not time to struggle against sin.

What are we to conclude, thence? That the Lord, in his goodness and justice, has neither created saving conditions nor conditions incompatible with salvation. If some are hardened by trials, if others grow torpid or fatten in satiety, this comes from our sin, not from our fortune. No one will have a right to say, one day, to the sovereign Judge, "Thou hast put me in a place where it was well-nigh impossible to give myself to thee." We are never tempted beyond our strength, and our heavenly Father, who is "not willing that any should perish," constantly holds his all-powerful grace within our reach.

This point, dear friends, I am anxious to establish strongly, for it is unceasingly disputed, and few problems are looked at with less simplicity than that which concerns the relations of riches and poverty with the gospel. It seems as if, on touching it, we lose all our coolness, so prompt are we to fall into declamatory exaggerations. Is it so difficult, then, to remember that in Christ there is "neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female," and that consequently there is also neither rich nor poor? In Christ, the superiority of rank is established neither by riches, nor, as some often seem to maintain, by poverty. When it was asked of the Saviour, "Which is greatest?" he did not go in search of a beggar, clad in rags, saying, "Rags make religious greatness." No; he took a little child and set him in the midst of his disciples, then said, "Who-soever humbleth himself like this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." To humble ourselves, to become like children, this is the only principle of greatness for the poor as well as for the rich. Poor or rich, the humblest are the greatest. It is necessary to be humble when one is poor, to "rejoice that he is exalted;" it is necessary to be humble when he is rich to "rejoice that he is made

low." It is in this manner, as you know, that our problem is propounded in the well-known verses of James.

Ye poor men, here is an exaltation which is revealed only to the humble; for it comes to you wholly by the grace of God, and your sufferings have no more share in it than your virtues. Ye rich men, here is an abasement which is revealed only to the humble; for it appeared to your eyes only at the moment when you comprehended that your greatness was nothingness itself; when you at last saw yourselves miserable and naked; when you felt that, as rich men, you would pass away "like the flower of the grass."

The real differences are here and nowhere else; they reside within, and not without; and, confining ourselves to this question of happiness, which does not suffer itself to be separated, moreover, as we shall constantly better see, from the question of religious greatness or salvation, are you not struck with this?—despite the social inequalities of which I have certainly made no mystery to you, there exists the glorious equality of divine love. In the presence of eternity, human distinctions assume their true value. Now, this is where the ways of the gospel deviate from the ways of the world.

While the gospel offers itself to all ; while it puts us all in a position to accept it and to be happy, — happy in the life to come, and also in the present life, — the world establishes fixed lines of separation ; it reserves to the few the exclusive enjoyment of its goods. I am mistaken, in excluding the many : it does not even satisfy the few. Making a weapon against God (against us) of our prosperities and trials, our riches and poverty, our sickness and health, our dotage and youth, closing at once both the avenues that lead to happiness, it fills souls with so cruel an uneasiness that the sighs of the happy here on earth do not yield in heart-rending melancholy to the sighs of the unhappy.

IX.

INDOLENT LEISURE—WIT—EASE—UTILITARIANISM.

BUT man possesses, perhaps, outside of God, other secrets of happiness. Let us examine again, let us examine to the end. Let us not grow weary, but fully accomplish for our age the sinister review of the Preacher. What external conditions can not do, will the arrangement of life effect? Is there really an art of living happily? Is felicity a method?

Yes, reply some; and this method is very simple. We are tormented by our cares and labors; we think too much, and work too much. Let us wisely glide through life, let us forget death, let us procure ourselves the enjoyment of doing nothing; earth has many joys in store for us if we take care not to poison them by dark theories and disheartening cares.

I have been brought in contact with some of these facile existences, and they have inspired me with an unconquerable feeling of repulsion and pity. There are no words to paint the incurable wretchedness of unemployed souls,

in whom frivolity has become second nature, and whom it has rendered incapable of every thing serious. God preserve you, dear friends, from knowing by experience that lassitude of repose, that weariness of false pleasures, that disgust of one's self and of others, which is the torture of the idle!

I am appalled, not by their griefs, but by their pleasures, whether they seek impotent distractions in gross, commonplace, public festivities, or whether, confined within the *enjoyments* of common life, they trail their ennui from visit to visit, and from drawing-room to drawing-room. Their labor—theirs who are unwilling to labor—their labor (and I know of none harder) is “to kill the time.”

To kill the time! What an appalling phrase! To kill the time, when the gospel says, “Redeem the time!” To kill that precious time, that time, the germ of eternity, that time which is lent us and is flitting away, that time the price of which so many know only when it is too late! They attempt to live in void, to live on idle conversations and poor repetitions; they end the day with a yawn, and prepare to begin the same round on the morrow; and it is in this way that they reach the end of the week, the end of the year, the end of life. This is wretchedness, dear friends!

Let us hasten to say, however, that there are lives better planned than these. The true, veritable method of happiness takes care not to forget that man is an intelligent being, and that his needs in this respect demand to be satisfied. It assigns a place to labor, to agreeable labor, to Epicurean labor, the charming diversion and indispensable spice of earthly joys.

Some few, as you know, go far in this respect. As their great care is to secure to their mind enjoyments which are worthy of being offered to it, they contemplate their living, they contemplate their thinking, they contemplate their enjoying, their always active vigilance subjects every thing to a pitiless analysis; by dint of admitting only fastidious pleasures, they come no longer to possess any.*

It would be too easy to prove that they are unhappy. I know of no more languishing, more repining, more laborious, because artificial, existences than those of these sometimes distinguished men, who, professing to be difficult, seem to live here on earth only as curiosos and dilettanti. What finds favor in their eyes? Shut up in a narrow coterie, lulled by the inces-

* A writer of the last century says, "By dint of carding one's mattress, he reduces it to nothing, and ends by lying on the bare ground."

sant repetition of a few ideas which have succeeded in penetrating therein, they succumb to the monotony of the conversations, or, rather, dissertations in which they seek that kind of happiness which may fitly be styled the happiness of men of wit.

But the problem admits of another less fine-spun solution, upon which Horace has set the seal of his genius. An openly selfish happiness, which believes itself greatly superior to frivolous happiness, is here in question. Alas! they are as miserable, or rather as contemptible, the one as the other.

Mark the nature of this evenly-balanced life of Horace,—a literary, peaceful retreat, facile pleasures, a moderate fortune, tranquillity, a profound contempt of men, a perfect forgetfulness of the soul and God, an absolute indifference to the truth,—such are the chief elements of the felicity which still finds daily so many admirers and enviers.

To spend one's days thus in the midst of elegant conversation, without abandoning his soul to the tempests called forth by tender feelings, family duties or public matters, moral conflicts, and generous indignation, is to have found the secret of journeying through life without being torn by the briers, or bruised on the stones of

the way. But it is also to have found the secret of reducing the soul to its least estate, of killing all the elevated part of our being. Is it not an impressive fact, dear friends, that all the methods of human happiness fall back one after another into the same line of conduct, or rather the same beaten track,—mutilation? These lives are happy only by reason of resembling death; these species of happiness are a negation. For my part, I know of no suffering that would not seem to me preferable.

Here is a man who has made up his mind never to yield to emotion. He incommodes himself for nothing and no one. He disdains questions, he ignores principles, he waives obligations. He gives himself just enough occupations not to become ennuyed, enough beneficence to be contented with himself, enough religion not to be uneasy about death, enough affections to keep alive the pulsation of his heart. He takes credit to himself for having neither insatiable ambitions nor violent passions; confined within a carefully-calculated moderation of feelings, thoughts, and desires, surrounded by that commonplace consideration which commonplace lives and commonplace virtues easily obtain, he remains at peace and enjoys life. Let others venture into politi-

cal or religious strife, let others believe with energy or deny with conviction ; he has chosen the middle path, where he journeys at his ease, sheltered from assault. Need it be added that he is not one to abandon himself to scandalous vices or to commit flagrant crimes ? His wisely-ordered existence does not allow of such anomalies. Through prudence, for health's sake, he is anxious to remain what the world calls an honorable man. He needs to esteem himself ; this, too, is necessary to his happiness.

And he esteems himself, and he is happy. . . . Forgive me for profaning such a word by applying it to so great, so profound, and so wretched a coward. His soul is devoid of every thing ; his heart is withered and empty. Oh ! who will make him change his peace for war, his joy for tears, his self-esteem for humiliation and disgust ? Who, I repeat, will make him feel that his felicity is the height of wretchedness, and that his life is death ?

There are plans which are still higher. Above frivolous existences, above selfish existences, there are useful existences. There are men who, without knowing the noble tortures of the ideal, without passing through the inmost travail of regeneration, do not pause, nevertheless, at the low regions which I have just de-

scribed. They have an intellect, a conscience, and a heart; the happiness which they pursue, they place on a higher level; they do not conceive of happiness without activity of mind, without practical devotion, without warm and powerful affections.

This is true, dear friends, and nothing is better suited to make us feel the absolute impossibility of discovering any where a happiness separate from conversion. What do such existences lack? A central interest fills them; here, private matters; there, public affairs; elsewhere, science. If busy men are happy men, these have resolved the problem.

They love their family, they are devoted to their country, the poor inspire them with sincere compassion; at all events, among the different kinds of luxury, they have known how to choose the only one in good taste, the only one which secures esteem, and gives the pleasure, the luxury of beneficence. They all have elevated tastes, all irreproachable habits; the frivolity of the so-called worldlings inspires them with insurmountable aversion; they must have ideas, action, feelings; their hearts beat with generous passions. It is the same with those who, by the use of their fortune and time, by the liberal gifts which they distribute, by the

institutions which they establish, by the useful and elevated impulse which they give to a whole country, acquire lasting rights to the gratitude of their fellow-citizens. What do they lack, then, and why are they not happy? For they are not so, and our incapacity of happiness outside of God never shows itself more strikingly than in these choice natures. Sometimes, I should say often, their virtues serve to feed their pride; worshiped, satisfied with themselves, they come to the point of no longer comprehending either repentance or, much more, conversion; they then settle down in the dull regions of philosophy, where nothing vigorous puts forth, where no joyous flower unfolds, where no warm ray of sunshine comes. At other times their sincere search for good awakens the moral man in them; the consciousness of their misery makes itself felt; vast needs are manifested; wounds become painful.

Wounds! There are such every where. And, independently of what passes in the recesses of the soul, where is the life that does not conceal fatal hours, after which there is no longer in us but mourning and suffering? These merchants have encountered ruin; these citizens have witnessed the wreck of their cherished cause;

these fathers, these spouses, these relatives, these friends have found the unutterable bitterness of that happiness

“Which suddenly breaks and, lost in space,
Leaves us appalled at having thought to live happy.”

Their felicity is transformed into a source of sorrow and despair. They have discovered that we have to die more than once here below.

I wish to exaggerate nothing, dear friends. I will suppose, if you like, an exceptional life, an impossible life, in which great griefs have never occurred, in which family joys, the progress of children, exquisite tastes, liberal occupations, rich conversations have filled to overflowing all the room that is not absorbed by devotion to the country or town, or the work of beneficence; I will suppose all the satisfaction that position, character, attachment, legitimate joys and pleasures can give; I will suppose that not only have the keenest tortures of the heart been spared, but that those other tortures which come from the defeat of the truth or the triumph of injustice have alike been lacking; I will suppose this, and then ask you what you think of such a happiness.

What do you think of it, Christians, you who have tasted that the Lord is good, you

who know what it is to weep in contemplating yourselves and to rejoice in contemplating God, you who know what it is to be set free from the absolute empire of sin, you who have heard a celestial voice announce to you forgiveness? Between the felicity of a weak Christian and that of a great moralist, (and I speak of this life only; what would it be if we looked at eternity?) I perceive the distance of earth from heaven.

X.

WORLDLINESS.

IT is because outside of God there is only the world, that outside of Christians there are only worldlings. Now what is the essential characteristic of the world,—that which is found in all its works, and consequently in all its happiness, in the most irreproachable as the grossest? The world fixes our dwelling, our country, here below. It teaches us to depend on men, to shun the evil which they can do, to seek the good which they can procure. Our chief interest, our central point, our treasures are on earth; we behold here our eternity.

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” This profound saying explains every thing. Are our treasures and heart on high? Have we there the highest good, the good of which we would consent at no price to be deprived? Do we transport thither all our joys, our hopes, our loved ones? Is yonder our country, our home, and our inheritance,

the great rendezvous, the final goal? Then we walk in the liberty and joy of the children of God; despite our weakness, we are strong; despite our trials, we are happy.

But are our treasures and heart below? Then there is no wound that does not reach us. We suffer through our sorrows, and we suffer also through our unceasingly menaced felicities. All that is precious to us is continually in peril. While the Christian is the happier the more he loves, the worldling, on the contrary, sees his sufferings increase with his affections. Wretched slaves of public opinion, we belong to ourselves no longer; nothing is so difficult in the world as to hold up our heads and be ourselves. This, dear friends, is a hard servitude. The world is without compassion; it spurns aside those whom it has destroyed, the moment that it no longer needs them. The world is pitiless toward the falls which it has caused,—like Satan, who tempts and then accuses. Let the prodigal son be dying of hunger—he will be sent to feed swine. Let Judas come to tell his remorse—it will be answered him, “What is that to us? See thou to that.”

The rigor of the world is as deadly as its love. It is sad to be exposed to malignity, to harsh judgment, to pitiless derision, and

to feel that all these strokes tell. We have learned the contempt of men (a disheartening knowledge, which comes not from the gospel); yet on these men, whom we despise, we do not cease to be dependent.

And what is the wages of the best treated, in their best season? They are caressed and extolled; they have hours of giddiness which they take for happiness. Then, as they will tell you,—those men who have played a great part on earth without God,—then come satiety, disgust, and, to use the word which alone can render this condition of the soul, ennui.

Yes! there is something which is not sharp pain, but which is still more formidable, perhaps,—ennui. The world becomes ennuyed. To escape ennui it tries every thing,—pleasures, labors, studies, business, political agitation. The world makes revolutions because it is ennuyed, and the art of amusing it at any cost is, it is said, the favorite art of statesmen. “Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness.” How true is this, even in privileged lives, where the labors of the intellect have created a sort of relative independence! Go to the end; go to the bottom; these lives are less vain than others; nevertheless, they remain vain. Wherever God

is not, a void is made which nothing can fill.

Ennui is the inevitable result of the attempts of man to live from his own resources. It is impossible to exist. We succeed in cheating ourselves for a few days, a few years, perhaps. The activity of studies, the importance of duties, the bustle of events preserve us for a little time from a tête-à-tête with ourselves. But the day that we meet ourselves we discover with despair that the void in our souls is as great as ever. All that we have thrown into it is swallowed up.

You now perceive the common feature in which all the pursuits of happiness, those of the days of the Preacher and those of our days, resemble each other: they are *worldly*. Hence their common wretchedness and their common vanity. Although their moral standard may be far from identical, it is enough that they belong equally to the world to be smitten with equal sterility,—a disheartening spectacle, which should draw tears from our eyes and put into our hearts an unceasing prayer; a necessity to warn all without ceasing who are mistaken in the way! Ah! that we,—who are certainly of no more value,—

that we may have faithful words, ardent supplications to entreat them to have pity on themselves, and to turn towards true happiness, which God offers them freely!

If in their very prosperity they have found ennui, what will it be in their trials? They are smitten—who will cure them? They are afflicted—who will console them? They are ready to die—who will save them?

Death! this is the end. And what will become of these happy, or, if you prefer, wretched men? What will avail their frivolity or earnestness, their useless or busy lives? What will giddiness avail? what firmness? Death transforms no one. Dying worldlings, we shall not rise again Christians.

XI.

THE GRAND MISTAKE IS IN SEEKING HAPPINESS WITHOUT GOD.

YOU see, dear friends, that whatever may be the diversity of the paths followed, they all end at the same point, the same catastrophe. At every point of the horizon, rebellious man has demanded happiness ; every where it has been promised him, and every where he has met irreparable deception. There is an unoccupied place within his soul which God alone can fill.

The great crime, and consequently the great calamity of man, is, that of wishing to dispense with God, of attempting to be his own God. Heathen antiquity had legends to depict the chastisements destined to such a crime,—the Titans smitten with thunderbolts by Jupiter for scaling Olympus, Prometheus stealing fire from heaven to create man, then devoured by his eternal vulture.

Ah ! “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ;” otherwise, humanity would

have resolved the problem which it has incessantly pursued for six thousand years. Here the victory is to the weak, the humble, and the poor, to those that have felt their sins, to the sick that have turned to the physician. In point of happiness as in point of pardon, if it be permissible to make a distinction between these two things, those alone receive it who consent to stretch out their hand for it.

But I will not proceed too rapidly,—determined to confine myself scrupulously to the subject, already so vast. Of this first discourse, I limit myself to placing beyond doubt the result which we have reached.

As you have already remarked, I have put aside the arguments which would have too easily decided in my favor. Accepting the terms of the question as it is propounded by the Preacher, and as it appears in the eyes of the world, I have scarcely lifted the vail, in passing, that shrouds eternity. Not only have I spoken to you simply of happiness in the present life, I have even forbidden myself to make application of extreme cases. I have spoken to you neither of ill-regulated affections and their poisons, nor of gross scandals, nor of crimes. Still more, I

have avoided pausing long in the presence of those deceitful joys which last only as long as the illusion: like ancient love, they vanish at the first ray of light. The drop of burning oil puts the God to flight as soon as the soul, as soon as Psyche lights her lamp and draws near to look. I have not presented to you those profligates as cold as marble, who do evil without pleasure, who are in love only with themselves, and who so quickly find lassitude at the bottom of their debauchery and cowardice. I have not presented to you those hypocrites, whose chastisement—a terrible one!—is that of being “filled with their ways.” I have not presented to you those violent natures, carried away by all the passions, escorted by all the sorrows. No; we have remained in the middle regions; we have interrogated lives in nowise exceptional, yet every where we have gathered the same answer,—the evils are real, the remedies vain, the problem of happiness is no more resolved in our time than in the days of the Preacher.*

* By the side of the Preacher, must be placed here the Book of Job. Man, distracted and bewildered, finds himself there face to face with another problem; only he views it in another phase,—it is no longer the vanity of happiness, but the inexplicable character of the trial which throws him into despairing perplexity until the moment that God appears.

XII.

THE PRESENT AGE PECULIARLY UNHAPPY.

OUR time! It has resolved it, perhaps, more imperfectly than any other. I say it to its honor. Yes, this age, whose calamities, on the whole, have not hitherto surpassed the usual measure, has more than its share of sadness, discouragement, and ennui. This is a melancholy age; all are struck by this. Olden gayety, olden carelessness, the freshness of olden times, are no more.

Why is this? Because our time has taken it upon itself to reflect; because a certain awakening of the conscience has occurred; because a few rays from on high have illumined the depths of our souls; antique serenity has decidedly bid us adieu.

Nothing was more common, formerly, than those complete heathens who, sometimes incredulous, sometimes believing on the faith of others, perfectly evaded all serious and saddening questions. That radiant calm of which Greece presented the accomplished type, and

toward which the worshipers of Greece — (witness Goethe, the last of the Greeks) — always turned with so much devotion, — that calm is a stranger to the nineteenth century.*

I am not the one to impute this to it as a reproach. It is a species of progress: to lose false peace is to take a step toward true peace. Let us say here that the gospel, the pure gospel, is, to-day, too well known not to exercise some influence even on those who seem the most strangers to it. Despite themselves, it propounds within them formidable questions. They put them aside, they shake them off, I

* M. Renan would gladly bring us back to it. He would have us, not deny the gospel (is the gospel worth a denial?) but disdain it, — but look down on it with that polite indifference, that indulgence which knows how to comprehend every thing, because it takes nothing in earnest; that philosophic placidity which is willing that there should be religion for the people, which has compassion on the gross needs of the ignorant, which accords to them their dogmas, — those of national tradition, and those which the spirit of the nation has called forth, — provided we no longer are interested in such trifles. Instead of problems which engross our whole being, we should have questions fitted to amuse the curiosity of scholars, subjects of dissertation to exercise historical and literary dilettantism. Ah, how pleasant, on viewing these melancholy tendencies, — how pleasant to turn our eyes to a cross erected outside the walls of Jerusalem! It is stained with blood; it tells of love, — of love and sacrifice. The peace which it proclaims is no longer the peace of ancient paganism; it is peace through expiation, it is peace with conversion, it is peace through the conflicts of sanctification. The disciples of the Crucified are called upon to crucify the old man and his works. They labor, they fight, they anxiously pursue the truth; they belong to him and serve him. I like this better.

grant, but they reappear always and every where.

And, as we are not to forget when seeking the causes of the secret anguish from which our generation suffers, the work of demolition accomplished by previous generations also reappears. At the same time that our conscience is more fully awakened, our intellect is more disturbed than ever, perhaps, before. We are the heirs of the eighteenth century. Wrought upon in contrary directions, affected by the evil to which transitional epochs are subject, we walk bent beneath the weight of a skepticism heavier to bear than in former times, because it is less fully accepted. In our days, we grant, the uncertainties of the mind have increased; our very progress has added to our sufferings.

Hence comes it that our times, dear friends, have lost beyond recovery that Hellenic serenity* which illumined the present life with so enchanting a light that the blessed spirits, dwelling in the Elysian fields, wept for earth, and eternally regretted the soft rays of the sun. Our times have even lost the already more troubled serenity of the epochs when the accu-

* This is disputed; and a few melancholy writers are cited in antiquity. But then it must be confessed that the rule is confirmed by the exception.

mulation of formal practices preserved souls from contact with the gospel.

Now, this contact takes place; our cotemporaries, the greater part of them, at least, know too much of it to be tranquil after the manner of heathens, too little to be tranquil after the manner of Christians. They have caught a glimpse of things in infinity that will never more suffer themselves to be forgotten. Miserable condition, when our belief constitutes our torture, when our religion becomes our hell! A little of the gospel causes profound alarm; much of it establishes marvelous peace. To enter the intermediate state, to propound problems without resolving them, to apply the probe to the wound without having courage to proceed with the operation and remove it, is to renounce the blessings of ignorance without laying hold of those of faith.

The causes of the melancholy which characterizes our times have been often sought; they are none other than this.* Earnest words have

* If I say that the melancholy of our times has no other cause, it is because I see in it the loss of the ardent and, let me add, generous illusions which animated the Frenchmen of 1789. Never, perhaps, did man carry confidence in himself further than then; never did he believe himself strong and good with more ignorant ingenuousness;

gone forth; it is no longer possible to live as if we had heard nothing. Why, terrified and hesitating, must we turn aside to hear no more? Why, reached by the Christian idea which saddens us, must we recoil before the Christian reality which would bring us happiness? Doubtless we have a presentiment that this is acquired only at the price of still more intense sufferings, of a crisis that will stir up and renew the depths of our being; but after

never was the idea of sin and the fall more completely blotted out. The only things to be changed are the institutions; as to the human soul, it is naturally perfect! Reason is about to march from triumph to triumph! The road to indefinite progress is about to be opened! The problem of universal happiness is about to be resolved by the simple unfolding of universal virtue! We are on the borders of the golden age!

Behold Condorcet writing his book and promising to humanity certain felicity, the prolongation of life, almost immortality on earth, at the very moment when he is fleeing before those who are seeking his life. The vast and tenacious hopes of his age are personified in him. Since that time, events have spoken; they have borrowed the voice of the Preacher to repeat to us once more, "All is vanity!" And now behold man, fallen from the height of his vain glory, lying discouraged, without strength, without pride, without energetic aspirations. He seems to have lost faith in himself, and not to have found faith in God. His temple is thrown down, and he sits among the ruins, nor seems to think of building another with better materials.

These materials are true Christian convictions, well-tempered qualities, liberties founded on the faith, souls which have learned to comprehend the saying of the apostles, "It is better to obey God than man." When such influences are felt in sufficient measure, then we can hope, and hope much; then we can draw up programmes as brilliant and less chimerical than those of '89.

this crisis, after these humiliations, after this death, life will be in us.

Such is, indeed, our story, is it not, friends? It is, indeed, in this hesitation, this twilight, this visible darkness, that our generation sits languishing. If its melancholy accuses it, it honors it also; it places it, in this respect at least, above careless generations.

Before quitting you, to-day, I wish to complete the first part of our investigation by listening to this generation itself, by lending an ear to the voices that have recounted its woes. Some of these are heart-rending and sublime, because they are sincere. I know of one, among others, which always moves me to the heart, because its accents come from the heart. If I have hesitated for a moment to repeat them to you, it is not that idle formalism has restrained me,—the apostle Paul cited heathen poets, Aratus and Epimenides,—but the sight of certain passions, certain disorders, certain images. But I will triumph over this repugnance, and will seek amidst many infamous things the lesson which we all need. Next to the Bible, next to the examination of our own hearts, there is nothing, as I have experienced, that urges toward God, that makes us relish the gospel, that demonstrates to us the privi-

lege of being placed upon the rock, like the cries of distress which come from the billows of the world. These unconsolated sorrows need to find their natural interpreters. When we paint them, we are suspected; but, when the picture is drawn by those who suffer,—above all, when noble poesy, in its sublime divinations, sings in tears what it has felt, its truth can be no longer contested.

There is, indeed, a counterfeit melancholy, a literary fashion, which is like all other fashions, stereotyped sorrows. These move no one. Who takes in earnest the vainglorious sadness of René, the sentimentality of Werther, the vague lamentations of Ossian, the imaginary griefs that resound from the harmonious lyre of Lamartine? Has not Byron himself, in his bitter imprecations, often less the air of a mourner than a rebel? *

All, nevertheless, have suffered in some degree from the contagion of our epoch. If melancholy is a fashion among some poets, it is, be sure, because it is a reality elsewhere; things are affected only when they correspond to the

* This, indeed, is by no means a complete enumeration. How many shades are there which I have not time to point out! That of Lamernais, for instance, the continually angry pessimist, and many others.

secret instincts of the masses. Moreover, true melancholy, that whose language is never invented, has also appeared among us, and it is this which I wish to quote to you : —

“The sweetest songs are oft the most despairing :
Immortal strains are sometimes naught but sobs.”

How many stains, I repeat, in these *Confessions of a Child of the Age*, which, under divers titles, a youth of genius has dared present to us ! And among the stains, what tears ! what treasures of sadness ! what unsatisfied aspirations ! what unquenched thirst ! what a confession of the wretchedness of the world ! what an involuntary preaching of the gospel ! I know of none more eloquent or earnest. Listen ; follow the poor unbelieving singer in his dark descent to the depths profound.

At first he essays carelessness : —

“Like a traveler reclining in his bark,
I let myself drift at random in the current,
Unconscious if the stream be treacherous or faithful,
Whether the river end, perchance, in lake or torrent.”

He then addresses himself to pleasure : —

“My heart, wearied of the dream that has possessed it,
Returns to satisfy its desires in reality.
Beneath the vain pleasures which I summon to my aid
I find such disgust that I feel myself dying.”

He knows henceforth what life is worth where

God is not ; his grief overflows, — a simple, despairing grief, that knows no set phrases.

“ I know that the earth swallows up hopes,
I know that to reap from it, we first must sow ;
But what I have felt and what I wish to write
Is what I have learned of the angel of sorrow.
I know it better, and can better tell it,
Since his piercing sword has engraved it on my heart.”

And he does not mistake the causes of his suffering. He feels what it is that he lacks, — the place void of Christ ; he shows it in his torn heart : —

“ I have no faith, O Christ, in thy holy word ;
I have come too late into too old a world :
An age without hope brings forth an age without fear ;
The comets of our times have depopulated the heavens.”

He contemplates these depopulated heavens with a dull eye ; all is obscured ; night comes on ; it is cold : —

“ Nothingness, nothingness ! Seest thou its vast shadow
Stealing o’er the sun as it turns on its fiery axis ?
It spreads ; the sun is dead ; eternity begins.
Thou wilt never love, thou who hast not loved.”

Is it not true, dear friends, that this sadness is touching, that it aids in fathoming the abysses of the soul, that it powerfully interprets the Preacher ? Is it not true that it is

fitted to make more than one Christian blush who has never sufficiently felt either the distress from which God has snatched him or the price of his deliverance.

But has our poet never desired this deliverance? Yes; and on this point again he is the true representative of a generation which consummates its unhappiness in hearing the truth and obtaining a glimpse of heaven. To obtain a glimpse of it, and turn aside from it, and remember it, and sigh for it, and again look back at it, and perceive that every thing is dim contrasted with such a light, and remain there, uncertain, combating, divided between the things below which we love and those on high which we wish to love; — this is a wretchedness without equal.

“To whom shall I address myself, and what friendly voice
Will console the heart that is wounded by doubt?”

This friendly voice can come only from heaven. It is toward heaven, therefore, that he turns in the moment of final despair.

“Ye who fly yonder, winged swallows,
Tell me, tell me, why must I die?
Oh frightful suicide! would that I had wings!
I would haste to unfold them in the beautiful, pure sky!”

The sky, that beautiful, pure sky, where

wings unfold so readily, it is in vain to seek to vail from him.

“I answer their scoffs, ‘Do what we may,
I suffer; it is too late; the world is old;
A great hope has passed over the earth;
Despite ourselves, we must raise our eyes to heaven.’”

But when the eyes are raised to heaven, what is perceived there? Will the human consciousness abandon itself to a vague trust? Will it forget the just and holy God?

“While my weak heart, still full of youth,
Had not yet bid adieu to its illusions,
I sought to lean upon the ancient wisdom
That made a demi-god of the sober Epicurus;
I sought to live, to love, to accustom myself to men,
To find a little joy and not count too much thereon,
To do what others did, to be what others were,
And to look at heaven without being disquieted.
I can not; despite myself, the Infinite torments me.
I can not think of it without hope and fear.
Let sages say what they will; my reason is dismayed
At seeing it, yet being unable to comprehend it.
What is this world, then, and what do we live for?
If, to live in peace, we must not look toward the skies,
But walk, like sheep, our eyes fixed on earth,
And deny that all else exists, — is this to be happy?”

No, indeed; this is not happiness. Happiness is impossible without holiness.

“Behold me in the hands of a great and powerful God
More formidable than all the evils here below;
Behold me alone, wandering, weak and wretched,
Under the eyes of a witness that never quits me.”

Are not your hearts filled with pity, dear

friends, at the sight of this shipwreck of a soul that feels itself perishing (I do not say that it has perished ; great things are wrought in the depths of these troubled natures) — yes, of a soul that feels itself perishing; that is stranding on the rocks, and raises the signal of distress ?

“ Ah ! you have sought to play Prometheus,
And have come, with blood-stained hands,
To take up and re-mold the work of the Creator.
He did better than you, — that daring adventurer, —
When, having made his man, and seeing him without soul,
He lifted up his head and demanded fire.
Your man was made. You had the flame,
And you extinguished with your breath the breath of God.”

Again, the imprecations continue : —

“ You sought to make a world. You have made it :
Your world is superb, and your man perfect !
Your mountains are leveled ; the plain is cleared ;
You have wisely cut down the tree of life ;
All is neatly swept and garnished on your railways ;
All is great ; all is beautiful ; but men die in your atmosphere.”

They die there, because something is lacking.
The distracted glance of the poet seeks the
Saviour : —

“ Ah ! that I might but kiss the dust, —
The credulous child of an unbelieving age,
And weep, O Christ, over this cold earth,
Which lived by thy death, and which will die without thee.

“ We are as old in our sins as at thy birth ;
We expect as much ; we have lost more.
More livid and colder than when awaked by thee,
The second time Lazarus lies stretched on his bier.”

Lamentable and instructive spectacle, that of this heart that wishes and does not wish, that thirsts for and is afraid of salvation, that feels the value of truth and departs from it! The conclusion, to us, is tears. God knows the rest.

“When I knew the truth,
I felt that it was a friend;
When I comprehended and felt it,
It already inspired me with disgust.

“Yet, nevertheless, it is immortal,
And those who dispense with it on earth
Are ignorant of every thing.

“God speaks; we must reply.
The only blessing that remains to me on earth
Is that of having sometimes wept.”

XIII.

NEED OF A BETTER HAPPINESS.

WHAT shall I add? Is not all now told? Is there still any one here who preserves a doubt as to the wretchedness of worldly felicities? Is not the funeral review of the Preacher of the nineteenth century ended? Have not those deep needs which God alone can satisfy, — those needs of enlightenment, peace, holiness, liberty, and happiness, — risen up before us? Have we not fathomed with our eye the void in the depth of the heart? Have not all the blessings on which man relies vanished successively, — all, even to hope, which is the last to take flight, — to hope which at length is sterile?

“Yes, human hope is weary of maternity,
And, with bruised breast, takes rest in barrenness.”

We must have something else, dear friends, other blessings, other hopes. We must have the higher life that wrests us from ourselves and opens celestial vistas to our gaze.

For is it not true that we all need to be

happy, and that the thirst for happiness is the lawful aspiration of our souls? Who, then, can tell the discouragement and despair of those who, having tried every thing, have found delight in nothing? Who can say, with the Preacher, —

“I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things. . . The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be. . . There is no new thing under the sun.”

What avails it to labor? And then, how many iniquities are there upon earth! “There be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous. . . I set myself (a sad spectacle to him who knows how to look no higher) — I set myself to consider all the injustice that is done under the sun.”

Lastly, is not death the inevitable term? “There is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked. . . A living dog is better than a dead lion.”

I leave you here, to-day. You will think of it, we will think of it till next Sunday. It is

well to pause a little time on the brink of an abyss, to look into and examine it. We will examine; but while examining, let us remember one thing, — to-day is Easter.

EASTER! What revelations in a single word! What deliverance after so much anguish! What a solution of the insoluble problem! All our paths were hedged with thorns; none ended in happiness; but here is a way, "A new and living way, which Jesus has opened for us through the vail, that is his flesh."

This Jesus is conqueror. He has lifted the heavy stone from the sepulcher. He is about to carry away a host of captives. "All is vanity!" exclaimed the Preacher, in despair. And the disciples, who have just adored our living Master, reply, with ineffable joy, "The Lord is risen!"

II.

The Conditions of Happiness.

The Conditions of Happiness.



LESSED are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” — *Matthew v.*

Blessed ! When the Lord Jesus “ opened his mouth ; ” when, for the first time, perhaps, he addressed a connected speech, an elaborated lesson to the crowd gathered about him in Galilee, the word which arose to his lips was the word *blessed* or *happy* !

Blessed ! I seem to see the poor earth, so unaccustomed to happiness, and on which, as we have seen, dear friends, it had been vainly pursued by so many roads, tremble with joy.

Blessed ! In commencing thus, our Saviour marked the place of the great problem which we have undertaken to study.

At the same time that he marked its lofty place, he fixed its true solution. He indicated by what a way of humiliation and tears we reach felicity ; he proclaimed the eternal incompatibility of rebellion and peace ; he placed within, in the recesses of the soul, in the inmost work of regeneration, the source of those joys which sinful man could not taste.

“ Blessed are the poor in spirit ! . . . Blessed are they that mourn ! . . . Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ! Blessed are the persecuted ! ” Indeed, if the world should speak, in place of Jesus Christ, it would use different language. “ Blessed,” it would say, “ are the proud and self-satisfied !

Blessed are they that know how to shun all moral suffering! Blessed are they whose souls are not tormented by the eternal needs of justice and truth! Blessed are those whom no one persecutes or censures!"

The beatitudes of Christ are stranger. Yes, at first sight. Nevertheless, when we look more closely, what, dear friends, do we find? That happiness really takes its rise on these naked heights, in these melancholy and austere places, that it proceeds thence, and no where else.

It proceeds thence; behold it: at its sight, our hearts experience a delicious calm. What do the beautiful verses that we have just read tell us? That we have entered into smoother waters. After the stormy voyage which we have made in the wake of the Preacher, we return to the haven whence we so obstinately strayed. It is yonder,—it is open before us. If God permit, we will enter it next Sunday; we will cast anchor there (may we all cast anchor there in reality), and will end our long voyage; or, if you prefer, complete our study. First, the pursuit of happiness, then its conditions, lastly, its possession.

We know now how true are the words of the Psalmist: "Their sorrows shall be multiplied

that hasten after another god." To *hasten after another god*, to seek to be happy without God, to seek to be saved without God, such is the highest desire of fallen man. "Without God,"—these words sum up his whole thought.

We have seen where they end. We have considered the weaknesses of the soul abandoned to itself and filled with its own ways. Ingenious in rendering himself miserable, passing by happiness, yet unwilling to grasp it, man goes on thus to the end, from deception to deception, and from weariness to weariness. Not that there are no sorrows in the path of Christians; there are many. Their felicity, brought forth in tears, often grows amidst tears, as I will not conceal from you. But what joy! what peace! What an unalterable foundation of true happiness! Compare them, dear friends.

Certainly, it costs us more to be miserable than it would to be happy; it costs us more to destroy than it would to save ourselves. How much pains do men take to secure to themselves unhappiness, and to evade the persevering grace of God! By what difficult paths do they march to condemnation! What labors in the service of the world!—what labors, and what a recompense!

I.

THE PROBLEM NOT PRESENTED TO THE SELF-SATISFIED.

AMONG those that have thus wearied of the roads to false happiness there are some, at least, as we have seen, that have felt their fatigue. They groan; they sigh; with them there is hope. For them will some day, perhaps, be realized the promise of our text, "Blessed are they that mourn."

Such, dear friends, — and I desire to point it out on the spot, — such is the first form under which are encountered the conditions of happiness which we are to demonstrate to-day. As to those that are satisfied, as long as they remain so, the gospel has no message to them.

Some are satisfied, alas! we grant it with a blush on the brow. By the side of the deep and passionate souls who fall often and low, but who suffer from their fall, who lie bruised and bleeding, I perceive light natures to whom insight seems lacking, who remain every where on the surface, who suffer little because they

desire little, who never fathom real problems or discover real miseries.

You would accuse me of having exaggerated the misfortune of worldlings if I did not take these into account. Yes; amidst the whirl of business and false pleasures are found men that protest against the Preacher, that have not discovered vanity, that declare themselves happy. More than one, perhaps, shrugged his shoulders on listening to our last discourse. It is these that I pity.

As the slave who feels himself happy is often one in whom servitude has consummated its infernal work, so the unconverted man who feels himself happy is the most worthy of compassion. Sin can not sink us lower. To settle down in sin is something more than to commit sin.

Carefully consider these species of happiness. You will see that they are founded wholly on the suppression of an idea, — the idea of duty, and, in the profound acceptance of the word, the idea of law. Now, when the idea of law is effaced, when the reclamations of the moral sense are no longer heard, when the ideal no longer troubles us, when the infinite no longer tempts us, when we have succeeded in shutting ourselves up in the present moment and in

vulgar satisfactions, then a total peace supervenes, a baleful and appalling peace.

You have all known these appalling species of security. You have known these men that support life without suspecting its weight, then die with a calmness disturbed by nothing,—neither by remorse with respect to sin, nor by doubts with respect to the soul, nor by anxieties with respect to eternity.

If suffering speaks to us of God, we are to reduce it to silence. We are to adapt ourselves to our misfortunes, and bring ourselves to say, “It is well with us.” Satan knows that so long as we aspire to happiness we are in danger of aspiring to deliverance, to forgiveness, to salvation. He takes care, therefore, to bargain with us for happiness at the lowest rate. While boasting to us of the blessings that are enjoyed in his service, the first lesson that he gives us is to be contented with little.

How small, indeed; is the ambition to which he invites us to confine ourselves,—to live tranquilly, and to satisfy a few vanities and desires! Ah! we are born for better things than these. There are within us, through the action of grace, fervent aspirations, noble desires, sometimes a glance cast heavenward; there is, in default of aught else, the faculty of being unhappy.

Let us not suffer ourselves to be deprived of this. Let us not consent to our own degradation ; let us not descend to this lowest rate of happiness. I repeat the expression, which accords too well with the lowest rate of morality, so that all of human destiny becomes at once degraded. We have abandoned our origin : at least, let us not forget it. To remember it will be to suffer ? Well, so much the better. We shall be wholly dead on the day that, separated from God, we shall have lost our last privilege, — that of sometimes weeping.

II.

THE PROBLEMS NOW PRESENTED TO THE CHRISTIANITY.

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But among believers a contrary movement is

being wrought. Under pretext of reacting against the abuses of doctrines, they have come to deny their importance. At the present moment, the few Christians who still insist on expiation proper, or who trouble themselves about the absolute infallibility of the Scriptures, or the absolute certainty of the canon, pass for minds behind the age.

Let us take heed, dear friends. Do what we may, the direct relation between the doctrine and the life will never be suppressed. To an enfeebled doctrine will correspond a languishing life. Believing imperfectly, we shall be imperfectly sanctified; imperfectly sanctified, we shall be imperfectly happy. Semi-Christianity never gives happiness; far from it, it often has the privilege of at once limiting the sacrifices exacted by true piety and the deep discontent which troubles worldly hearts.

We are tending to *insipidity*; suffer me to employ this word, which alone expresses my thought.* To have *character*, to have "salt

*To be just we must take into account the internal crises through which we pass, and which the most believing endure. The air to-day is heavy; we all walk under the weight of vast problems. Resolved for us, I grant, they are nevertheless unceasingly debated before and about us; they besiege our thoughts; they are like an enemy that we have repulsed and shall repulse again, but that is always at hand and keeps us on the alert. We are conquerors, yet weary. I do not complain of this consequence of war, which has its use in

in one's self," is already a part of happiness. When the Lord wished to raise up Job, he set him again firmly (I dare not say rudely) in the ways of simplicity and truth. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" The Lord knew that Job, once submissive, would be happy.

We plan every kind of covert rebellion, every kind of reservation against truths which displease us, every kind of conduct invented by human pride to maintain its independence in point of fact against divine revelation. We know no longer what it is to put our hand on our lips, and cry, "I have uttered that I understood not. I abhor myself."

For my part, I am resolved to present doctrines to you as they are in the Bible, with all their room for error, with all their savor, with all their power to cast down and raise up, to cause weeping and happiness. Who are the strong and joyful Christians? Look around

the plans of God; to be forced to vigilance, to study, to the examination of scientific questions, is also an advantage. But demonstrations are not axioms; there is a peace which accompanies trust, and which exists with difficulty in the neighborhood of the critical spirit. Another peace, more serious and no less real, subsists despite every thing, thank God! The *rock* is a rock, and the waves that beat about its base will never overthrow it. We are there in safety; only in troubled hours we feel the wind of the tempest sweep over us, and inhale the acrid air of angry waves.

you, and inquire also of history. They are those to whom the Scriptures are truly the word of God; those to whom God is truly a Father, and Christ truly a Saviour; those to whom the Holy Ghost is truly the Comforter; those to whom the events of life are truly the acts of Providence, to whom trials are warnings, to whom joys are blessings, to whom death is the entrance into life without pain and without end. They are those, in a word, who take all the declarations of the Holy Scriptures simply and by the letter, without wavering or theological alteration. The apostle Paul, writing to his brethren of Philippi, did not separate the advancement of their faith from the "joy of their faith." The joy of our faith! Whence comes it that we experience so little? Alas! a weak, uncertain faith, subordinated to the sovereign control of human science,—such a faith can never be joyous.

III.

CONVERSION THE SOLE CONDITION OF HAPPINESS.

IT was incumbent on me to point out the general propensities that tend to prevail among us, before entering upon the subject-proper of our discourse, — the conditions of happiness.

To tell the truth, these conditions are reduced to a single one, — *conversion*, — as you understood from the beginning of my first discourse. And since, through all our researches, one axiom has always penetrated every where, one idea has always been brought out with increasing force, — the problem of happiness is that of regeneration.

Whoever, dear friends, demands less of you than this, deceives you, or is himself deceived grossly. As it already seems to me demonstrated by the various journeys which we have made in pursuit of worldly happiness, true felicity is not found on the surface. For this we must dig deeply ; we must stir up and renew the inmost depths of the human soul. Neither

circumstances, nor plans of life, nor temperaments, nor habits, nor particular reforms, nor any thing that is accomplished outside, leaving the old man intact, can procure us this blessing.

And it is because ~~this~~ is so, that true happiness appalls us, that we all vie with each other in turning aside from it. Between the impulse which makes us wish for joy, and that which makes us fear conversion, the first, without the grace of God, will always gain the ascendancy. There is nothing that man will not have and endure rather than conversion.

To become converted is the odious command of the Bible. Tell us of faith, of piety, — these expressions we accept, because we know how to weaken them. Do not tell us of conversion, for conversion does not admit of two meanings; conversion is conversion.

We consent to listen to the preaching of the gospel; we consent even to admit the truth of the gospel; still more, we consent to make efforts to accomplish the precepts of the gospel. But the fundamental precept, the royal law, the gift of the heart, and the complete change of the life, — these we refuse, for, to accord these, would be to renounce ourselves.

Many religious practices, much orthodoxy, many works, — these are still nothing, so long

as we do not give ourselves, so long as we are not renewed, so long as we are not converted. The matter of conversion is at the same time the simplest and most profound of which we can conceive. To change the fundamental course of a life ; to walk in a direction diametrically opposite to the preceding ; to take a new master ; after having been the slave of sin, to become the slave of righteousness ; after having had our treasure below, to have it on high ; to detest, as formerly we admired, ourselves ; to replace our joys by sorrows, and our sorrows also by hitherto unknown joys ; to enter the narrow way where falls still abound, but where a powerful hand raises and sustains us ; to advance in the light and toward the light ; to see life clearly ; to know whence we come, and whither we go ; to have a Father in heaven ; to be able to say, for the first time, " Our Father who art in heaven ; " to feel ourselves members of a great and blessed family ; to feel ourselves citizens of a glorious country, — who can ever express the immensity of such an internal revolution !

We do not desire this revolution. Above all, we insist on remaining our own masters ; and the gospel excites our deepest indignation as soon as it pretends to transform itself into a

living (and mortifying) reality to us. Until then, we love it, perhaps. The system of Christianity pleases our intellect; we do not refuse to admit its most mysterious doctrines. The doctrine even of regeneration, so long as it is only a doctrine, we hear expatiated upon, perhaps, without frowning. "Ye must be born again. . . . Unless ye are born again, ye can not enter the kingdom of heaven." These words of the Saviour in no wise shock us as the text of a sermon, and, the sermon ended, we return home with cheerful mind and contented heart.

But the day comes, thank God! when, for the first time, these words, which we have so long heard for others, we hear for ourselves. It is we that are perishing; it is we that are wholly dead in our errors and sins; it is we that can only revive by turning to the free mercies of the Lord; it is we that must be born again! At once our pride rebels, and the battle begins, — the battle against Him who loves us, the battle against holiness, the battle against happiness.

Who can tell his revulsion of feeling? There are as many different kinds of conflict as men. In one, a profound and sudden crisis, which marks a solemn, precise point in existence,

which clearly separates existence with God from existence without God. In another, and this is the ordinary way, a gradual modification, which, through many alternations, through doubts and uprisings, ends by delivering us from our former servitude to usher us into the service of a new master.

No matter ; the fact is the same ; it is always the same mercy that forewarns and attracts us ; always the same wickedness that offers resistance ; always the same humiliations, and the same joys.

It is from this that men have labored to deliver themselves for eighteen hundred years. If, casting my eyes back on what is called the history of the Christian church, and what might better be called the history of Christianity, I wished to designate by a single word the rebellion which has characterized it, I should say that the great crime of Christianity has consisted in this, — that it has sought to diminish, to veil, to retrench as much as possible, the doctrine of conversion. To build up pretended churches, without seriously propounding to any one the question of regeneration ; to gather together so-called Christians by way of hereditary transmission, combined sometimes with the magical action of the sacrament ; to replace free and

voluntary adherence by catechumenates ; and, while speaking of conversion (how would it be possible wholly to suppress it?) to throw it in the background, as a final resolution which should not be waited for to proclaim one's self a member of the body of Christ, to receive baptism, and to partake of the Lord's Supper, — such are the tactics which have been employed with appalling perseverance.

In the times of the apostles, dear friends, a faith in Jesus Christ which was not conversion had not yet been invented. Whoever ranked himself among the disciples of the Saviour professed to belong to and to love him ; that is, to have passed from darkness to light ; that is, to have been converted. And, without going back to the times of the apostles, it is easy to see to-day, wherever a serious understanding of the gospel is awakened, men who have never doubted the historical truth of the Christian dogmas, and who, nevertheless, refuse to declare themselves believers, until the moment when they can say with safety that their historical faith has become a personal faith. He only has a right to affirm that he believes in Christ, and is a Christian, who knows that Christ has redeemed him, that he loves him ; in short, that between him and Christ there is henceforth an ever-

lasting bond. The only believer is he who is converted.

It was incumbent on me to dwell on this point, because it comprises every thing. Here, consequently, is the heart of the battle. In all times, and under all forms, man has striven to make for himself a gospel without conversion, a faith without conversion, a church without conversion, and, need I say, a happiness without conversion. Grant him this reservation, and he will accept divine revelation. But this reservation sweeps away all revelation ; for what is a revelation that remains in the intellect or the memory, but does not change the heart ?

I well know that there is a very simple means of denying the necessity of such a change, — namely, to deny the depth of the fall. If there are but partial alterations in us ; if we *commit sins* instead of being *sold to sin* ; if the human self is intact ; if the principle of good, endangered, but not forfeited, still resides in our souls, in this case the remedy is simple : we are to correct ourselves of our faults and bad habits ; the point in question is no longer to become converted.

Consequently, Christ is an aid, rather than

a Saviour; the Holy Ghost sustains, rather than regenerates us; all dogmas bend at once, for all are dependent on each other; the whole gospel descends to that common level where we still see men in need of pardon and assistance, but no longer poor, fallen, and lost beings, whom an absolutely free grace comes to seek, and who, warned by an eternal love, and entreated by the divine action of the Spirit, give themselves, let themselves be taken, I should say, and endure a complete transformation. On one side of this new birth, all was death; on the other, all is life. On the one side, sin reigned; on the other, Jesus is king. On the one side, wretchedness struck hands with rebellion; on the other, happiness sits by the side of obedience.

You understand, now, dear friends, that happiness exacts conversion, and that conversion, in its turn, supposes the fall. It is to the fall, therefore, that we must give our earnest attention in order to resolve the problem of happiness.

Let us put the question clearly. This question concerns our relations with God; it is against God that man rebels; it is from God that man has separated himself; it is in contrast with God that the total incapacity for

good appears in man. We should exaggerate greatly, we should go contrary to evidence, should we pretend that the unconverted man, though habitually drawn into evil, is incapable of any good impulse in the ordinary relations of life. There are acts of goodness, disinterestedness, devotion, and integrity in the world ; and whoever, under the pretext of lofty spirituality, permits himself to liken them to acts of wickedness, selfishness, or deceitfulness, will arouse the instinctive protests of all consciences, and have against him worldlings and Christians, the declarations of experience and those of the Bible.

The Bible is far from assimilating the unregenerate man who springs into the flames to save a child to the wretch who thinks only of gormandizing, or the monster who delights in the tortures of his victim. The Bible affirms no such enormities. This is what it says :— There is none just, no, not one ; no man loves God ; we are all alienated from him ; our hearts are wholly closed to him ; we are unwilling to be his children ; we abhor our normal destiny, and a miracle of grace is needed to render us capable of returning to it.

The Bible affirms naught but this, and this is quite enough, since it is the complete denial of our origin.

As the fall is the primitive, fundamental fact, our mournful entrance on earth, the basis of our race, so the dogma of the fall is the basis of all revelation. Where it is suppressed, where it is attenuated, the good news of salvation loses all its value. If we do not begin by feeling ourselves lost, we have not ears to hear the merciful voice which announces to us that we are saved.

But the word that proclaims the fall, the complete fall, is one of those "hard sayings" that we do not like to hear. Fallen man, who is unwilling that any one should speak to him of his fallen state because he is unwilling that any one should speak to him of his conversion, has succeeded in excluding the fall from the current of general ideas in circulation about us. Seek the fall; I say more, seek the indifferently-earnest feelings of sin in the manifestations of contemporaneous thought; with very rare exceptions, you will not find them. What place does common Deism allot, I ask, to the feeling of sin? And does not this so insufficient, so limited, place disappear entirely in sensualism? Is not the goodness of man the common basis of the systems which are in vogue among us? What was preached yesterday by the Saint-Simonians, the Fourierites,

and all those who, under one form or another, proclaimed the glorification of the passions, and planned Paradise on earth? What is preached to-day by those thinkers to whom the different systems of religion, including Christianity, are only the manifestations of human thought? As to Pantheism, it is, doubtless, unnecessary to say that the first of its dogmas is the absolute denial of evil.

The organs of Spiritualism have not shown much superiority in this point. In M. Cousin, in M. Maine de Biran, we meet many lofty considerations; but in their profound studies of our faculties and tendencies, in their analyses of man, it has never occurred to them, to my knowledge, to discover sin. I mean sin, such as is denounced by the Scriptures, such as we have learned, I hope, to know and detest in ourselves. Human wisdom points out imperfections, it denies the fall.

Denies the fall! Indeed, one would ask how this is possible, if every thing were not possible to the instinctive bad faith of a heart that will not suffer itself to be persuaded. Behind humiliation it has a presentiment of grace, and it is as much afraid of the one as of the other. It is resolved to defend itself against God.

It is unnecessary, dear friends, to explain

this strange phenomenon of the great fact of the fall escaping the scalpel of these philosophical anatomists, who point out the infinitely little ones.

I call the failings and sighs of humanity to witness. Is man good? Is he happy? Is there nothing in him which rises in protestation? Do his aspirations accord either with his destiny or conduct? Do we not feel within ourselves the tragic contradiction pointed out by the Pauls and the Pascals? Have we not the desires as well as the remorse, not of limited and imperfect, but of fallen, beings?

The fall is denied! yet I find within myself the mad conflict of passion and duty. The fall is denied! yet my "heart is two men," according to the expression of a poor negro of Sierra Leone. The fall is denied! and do those great sorrows which I recounted to you in my last discourse, and the crimes which no one contests (for, strange to say, the fall and sin are alone contested),—these crimes, and the suffering and death which reign here below,—do they all belong to the natural order of things? Can we imagine a God in the plans in which all these would find place? Are crimes, sorrows, and death,—death in its pres-

ent form,—of divine creation? Have rebellion and perturbation no share in these?

Let us not forget, moreover, that to lessen the fall is to deny it. An imperfect fall does not explain what is in us and about us. Either the whole man has turned aside from God, or the whole man has given himself to God. Here the main act is the only one that counts; the main direction is the only one that is of consequence. Unity is the law of our nature, and we feel plainly that our being, our *self*, is either in the descending or the ascending path; our treasure is either on high or below; there exists no intermediate position.

Those who seek to weaken the importance of the fall forget that there is something graver than sin; namely, the state of sin; as there is something more essential than prayer; namely, the state of prayer. Let us not pause at the surface, but go to the bottom; the great question always relates less to the acts than to a state.

Now what has been the *state* of humanity since the fall? What do we discover in ourselves? Are our sins simple imperfections, the natural condition of our circumscribed existence? Are our sins but faults, but accidents? Is not evil, on the contrary, in our heart, at

the root of our being, at the sources of life? He who doubts it has never fathomed his innermost self.

I know that the idea of a total fall enrages our pride. But this is precisely what it is designed to do. Pride, which was the cause of the fall, must not survive the uprising.

We would gladly persuade ourselves that, though all is at the bottom depraved, good in some respects continues to dwell within us; we speak, having recourse to a contestable translation, "of the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Very well; I am not the one to deny it, Bible in hand; there are indeed lights that enlighten all men. No man will have a right to say before the bar of God, "Light, both within and without, was refused me." — This is certain; it remains to know whether this light justifies or accuses us. God has shown me his will, and has not left me in ignorance of the true way; am I, therefore, the less fallen, the less radically corrupt, if I reject this will, if I turn from this light?

Man is a unit; we never hold this in sufficient remembrance. In rebellion against God, our state, — I repeat the word, — our state is a state of complete rebellion, although we may sometimes prefer good to evil in the accidental

circumstances of social life. Reconciled to God, our state is a state of complete submission; and this is so true that the apostle John was able to write, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," although Christians, as we do not deny, are daily guilty of new sins.

One word more, dear friends. The fall is not only thorough and total; it is also (this is no less essential) *continued*. In default of laying stress on this point, the most orthodox notions concerning the fall may be presented to us and receive our acceptance without exciting in us the least feeling of personal sorrow with respect to sin. While comprehending that Adam is indeed the head of our race, while being humiliated at the thought that our family has fallen, we do not ourselves receive the death-blow so long as we are not ourselves arraigned for trial.

It is necessary that we should receive the death-blow;—if the old man be not slain, how will the new man be born? Let us, therefore, maintain the lamentable fact of the fall in all its seriousness and in all its phases. Humanity has fallen; there is no more pride of race; I have fallen in turn; there is no more individual pride.

I have fallen in turn; I have followed the

example of Adam ; I have done what I knew to be wrong, and what I might have shunned ; I have rejected the God who offered himself to me and whose Spirit acted upon my heart, I have shut my ear to his words, I have listened to those of the tempter, I have eaten the forbidden fruit, I have eaten it because it was forbidden. Is not this the confession of all of us, dear friends ? Have we not all desired to be alienated from God ? Have we not all preferred darkness to light ? Have we not all been guilty of the sin of Adam ?

Such is the abyss into which we have fallen, —an abyss of sin and misery. Sin and misery —mark well the union of these two things. Therein is found, as it were, the luminous center of our study ; so long as we separate sin and misery, happiness and holiness, we can not attain the end. Without wishing to affirm — far from it — that every trial is a chastisement, I strongly maintain that the great foundation of our suffering rests on sin alone, and I add that sin is the sting of all our private sorrows ; it envenoms our anxieties, difficulties, reverses, lassitude, vexations, and heart-breakings ; much more, it mingles a secret bitterness with our best joys.

What a genealogy is that of human sorrow ! At the origin, the common trunk, the common root of the ills of life, is sin. Then two branches diverge, — physical sufferings, labor and fatigue, the vast train of diseases and death ; moral sufferings, temptations, covetousness, passion, remorse, struggles, all that pertains to the corruptions of the soul, all that pertains to the miseries of life, all that pertains to the tortures of our unhappy hearts.

It has been said, “ We should draw no distinction between the happiness of the soul and its perfection.” A great principle, which at once enlightens the Bible and our destiny, the idea of God and the idea of man ! Between happiness and holiness there is perfect equivalence ; the God sovereignly good is also the God “ sovereignly happy ;” and when the children of God appear to the ravished eyes of John, at the opening of the kingdom of Christ, by what terms does he designate them ? “ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection !” *Blessed and holy* — this is true ; we are called to find happiness in order ; and among the favors of God the least precious is not that which interdicts us happiness in rebellion. It chills the heart to think what would become of us, should we succeed in wholly suppressing uneasiness for sin.

What is our legitimate end? Were we created to depend on no one, or to rely on our Creator and Father? This is a question easy to resolve, and the question of happiness is bound up in it. We possess true repose only when we have regained our self-poise by returning to our normal condition. Formed in the image of God, we need that this image shall be reëstablished within us, — that is, that selfishness shall be conquered by love. Love unites; selfishness disjoins.

Ah, yes! “gladness is sown for the upright in heart.” Yes; the apostle is right when, wishing to teach us how to “love life and see good days,” he directs our eyes toward holiness. Do you pretend to live happily, — live as Christians? Hitherto you have lived so but partially. When I seek to picture to myself happiness without conversion, I can only do so by supposing for a moment that the fall had not taken place. A ravishing supposition, in which it is lawful to indulge! Man was free to choose obedience and goodness. Suppose that he had chosen them; that he repulsed both temptation without and temptation within, — without which the first would have had no existence, — and that the human family had entered that path the light of which would have increased un-

til the perfect day. Tell me, dear friends, what would have been the joys of our earth! Tell me what accents of gratitude and felicity, instead of maledictions and sighs, would have escaped without ceasing! Tell me whether the terrestrial paradise would not have been the gate of heaven.

Holiness makes paradise; and what makes hell? Need we look therein for aught else than sin to behold misery? May not definitive sin strike hands with definitive wretchedness? Does not the man who determinedly settles in sin and, rejecting all grace, chooses separation from God, choose hell? If heaven were open before him, would he not abhor entering therein? He neither could nor would wish to enter; he would flee from such happiness.

We often form very complicated, and at the same time gross, ideas of the judgment of God, his rewards and chastisements; we imagine sentences which are not the verification of the state of souls. Did we know how to read our Bible and to meditate simply on the meaning of the one word, regeneration, we should comprehend that eternity begins here below; that

the separation of the wicked from the righteous, which at the last day will be manifested by the angels to the eyes of all, is wrought now in the recesses of hearts; that each one will “go to his own place;” that moral necessities will act with irresistible power. As the cherubim armed with a flaming sword guarded the entrance to the terrestrial paradise, so another flaming sword will guard the entrance to the everlasting paradise, and on its blade will be written, “Happiness in holiness.” This sword will keep good watch.

Dear friends, this makes us shudder. To find ourselves with a hardened heart in the presence of Christ; to be compelled no longer to doubt his love; to see him with our eyes, and turn away from him; to lose all that we love, and not to be able, not to be willing to love what endures eternally; — what more is needed to make hell complete, — hell which is a place of misery, because it is a place devoid of love? This is the worm that dieth not; this is the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; this is utter darkness.

God forbid that I should dwell on a subject which I approach but with a shudder! God forbid that I should attempt to define what may be still undetermined, and that I should in any

wise limit the effects of divine mercy! I only say that certain problems, which render us dizzy by their magnitude, and which should urge us to pray for all mankind, propound themselves with unexpected clearness when we seize the relation of holiness and happiness; when we comprehend that the sentence is internal before being external; that before being a judgment it is a state. If heaven be union with God, if hell be separation from God ("My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" exclaimed the holy condemned One, laden with the sins of the world), if this be so, how can we help seeing with affright that beings, endowed with free-will, and who would cease to be themselves on the day that they should be transformed by pure constraint, may become eternally wedded to a hatred against which all the arrows of grace are blunted?

Weigh, dear friends, certain words of the gospel, and measure in your thought the miseries of final obduracy. Why does Satan appear to us the most wretched of creatures? Because he is the most rebellious. His wretchedness is measured by his wickedness. A slanderer, a tempter, the father of lies, and the enemy of God, he has reached the height of suffering by attaining the height of iniquity.

Thus every thing brings us back to the highest rule, the law of the moral world,—the union of holiness and happiness.

I insist on this with the more care, that I know, both by the experience of life and that of my own heart, the seductions of that disgraceful system styled selfish Christianity.

In one sense, every one wishes to go to heaven, and no one wishes to go to hell. In fact, every one wishes to be happy. But when heaven is holy, when happiness is holy, the case is quite different and many illusions are dissipated.

It is important that they should be dissipated. They would be deplorable Christians, we must admit, who should make their eternal felicity the result of calculation and, having computed what is to be gained by obedience and lost by rebellion, should turn to the side on which there is the most profit. To them religion would be little more than a scheme to secure peace on earth and joy in another life.

I have no taste for refinements, as you know, and I have never proposed to you to be more fastidious than the gospel. I believe with the gospel that the desire of happiness is lawful, and this desire does not appear to me criminal because it is interested. Indeed, God, who knows our nature, has not disdained to employ

with us the stimulus of promises and terrors, rewards and chastisements. Nevertheless, let us not forget that the man who sees naught in the gospel but punishments and rewards, who sees naught in heaven but happiness, and in hell but wretchedness; the man who knows neither the weight nor the sorrow of sin; the man who does not seek first of all his God, his Saviour, him who loves him, him whom he loves in turn, — such a man will not reach his goal, because he has strayed from the way. Selfishness can not enter heaven. We do not mourn our sins by calculation; we do not seize grace by calculation; we do not become converted by calculation. If piety be the best of calculations, it is something else first of all. The bruised heart does not calculate; it cries, it seeks, it finds, it seizes upon grace, it converts itself, or rather, it is converted. Then it possesses happiness, for the converted alone are happy.*

* We thus pass over, without having to pause there for an instant, the low region where rules the ethics of interest. Among the solutions of the problem of happiness, I know of none more ignoble and false. There is an *art of being happy* which will never make men any thing but unhappy, because it will never make any but egotists; because it will never set any one in the austere path of duty. The duty which is only calculation is no longer duty.

IV.

CONVERSION WITHIN OUR REACH.

THE condition of happiness is now known to us. Let us pursue our examination; let us see how God places it within our reach. Between the fall and conversion, a prodigious miracle must be accomplished. The more we have relied on our total depravity, the more important is it that we should discover the powerful levers which God employs to suppress or do violence to our free-will.

Since there is nothing good in man, it is necessary that the entire work should come from God. Behold by what means his mercy does not weary of entreating our depraved hearts. You will see that nothing is lacking.

In the first place, marvelous to relate! it has set a witness within us; a witness which is not of us; an incorruptible voice, which utters protests and warnings.

In the second place, it has given us an external revelation; a revelation of condemnation by the law, a revelation of pardon by the gos-

pel ; a double appeal, fitted to break the obstinate resistance of our rebellion and pride.

Lastly, when the most earnest warnings of both the internal and the external witnesses, when the most touching manifestations of infinite love are foiled and cast away before the obstinacy of a perverted heart, God deigns to act on this heart itself. Addressing it, he interprets to it his words ; the Holy Ghost forewarns and entreats us, ready to give himself fully to those who shall desire him.

Such is the truly marvelous sum of the means of conversion which the Lord prepares for us. We will endeavor to consider them more closely.

The first of these means, conscience, above all, should fix our attention, because this has been oftenest misunderstood. Some, after demonstrating that conscience subsists, despite the fall, have sought to conclude from this that man is not wholly fallen ; others, feeling the need, as may be conceived, of reacting against such a doctrine, strive to prove that conscience does not subsist.

There is error on both sides, and identical error, although each one draws opposite conclusions. Is it imagined that the conscience is part of the human self ? It is quite another

thing ; it is a witness of God within us ; it is a law written within us, a warning and protesting voice.

This law is in me ; but it certainly is not myself. It escapes my jurisdiction ; much more, it rises up against me and condemns me. In me, but without me and against me, the moral sense accomplishes its glorious work, which we should contemplate and comprehend, instead of striving to deny. That which is myself is wholly fallen ; I am fully conscious of it ; I know where and what are my heart and will in consequence ; but that which is God remains. Let us loudly affirm that sin is not permitted to abolish law ; any more the law written in us than the law proclaimed by Moses and wrought out by Jesus Christ.

Suppose for a moment that God, instead of engraving within us those ineffaceable characters which proclaim the superiority of righteousness over iniquity, of goodness over cruelty, of sincerity over falsehood, had deemed it proper to engrave them upon us,—upon our breast or arm,—would conscience have changed in nature ? No ; it would have remained what it is,—the law that condemns us, the testimony of God in man. What would we then have done ? What we do daily. Over these accusing characters

we would have cast our rags ; the better to efface them we would, perhaps, have attempted to write over them our rebellion and infamy ; but despite all and through all, despite the rags, rebellion, and shame, the immortal palimpsest would have continually reappeared.

It reappears, dear friends. It matters little whether conscience be engraven on our breast or in the depths of our soul, it is no more a part of ourselves in the first case than in the second ; it is in both cases a divine law which subsists in the face of man ; which he may read or not read ; the declarations of which he may strive to hide by covering them with a vail, but which none the less remain.

It remains, the precious feeling of justice and goodness ; and the deeper is our fall, the greater becomes the importance of the part reserved to its faithful warnings.

What is this part, dear friends ? Conscience is charged with preventing us from being happy in evil. Is not this something glorious, excellent ? The fall which would have suppressed conscience, or, which amounts to the same, would have destroyed the integrity of its testimony, — such a fall would have been without remedy and also without suffering.

For suffering there must be strife, and for

strife there must be two. Behold fallen man on one side and conscience on the other! the everlasting and salutary conflict is about to begin; the law, that teacher which alone leads to Christ, is about to enter on its blessed work. And you come to suppress one of the combatants! Instead of an adversary to fallen man, you wish to make conscience no longer but an accomplice or a victim of the fall!

Ah! ask yourselves what it is that in you daily resists God. That which resists is what is fallen. That which protests in the name of God, that which proclaims the law of God, even at the moment when you refuse to hear or comprehend it, is not you, but the witness of God within you.

Once more, I know with what honorable and pious intention men seek to complete the fall of man by joining thereto the fall of the conscience; but the result is as deplorable as the intention is excellent. Far from thus aggravating the fall, it is as much as possible diminished; for what I just called the *continued* fall is suppressed, — that which humiliates us, which bruises us, which leads us to conversion. Take away my conscience, — I mean a conscience in whose testimony I can confide, — and you take away the feeling of my existing responsibility,

of my individual crime. My race is fallen, I grant; as to myself, I feel no more guilty than a poor disabled vessel that floats adrift. It is impossible to shape our course without a rudder.

Among the causes which have weakened the awakening of Christian convictions, it seems to me that this should occupy the foremost rank. Consciences have not been sufficiently called in question, responsibilities have not been sufficiently pointed out; we have inclined too much toward a certain system of absolute inactivity, where, under the pretext of giving glory to grace, some will be saved of necessity, while others will be lost without the least real possibility of escaping condemnation.

These amendments to the gospel have always resulted in endangering and benumbing souls. Is it not true, dear friends, that you *feel* what I say? Is not the witness of God within you, and does it not raise its voice, at this very moment, to confirm my words? I speak to you all as to consciences, pardon me the expression.

And how could we be Christianized if the conscience had participated in the fall? And how could we repent if the conscience had participated in the fall? When the prophets

addressed the impious and corrupt dwellers in Israel and Judea, did they not appeal to something divine which testified within them? When Jonah went to preach to Nineveh, that great city, did he not know that amidst the colossal depravity and idolatry, something divine remained standing, — something which he could invoke? And this something replied, and the sinners humiliated themselves. Ah! be sure that nothing of the sort would have happened, had the conscience been part of man, and consequently been fallen with him.

The Moral sense subsists like physical senses. Physical witnesses have remained worthy of credence; moral witness also remains worthy of credence.

And, I repeat, the fall, far from being thereby diminished, is increased. It puts on all its appalling gravity only when it leaves man in presence of the divine witness.

Such a witness importunes us, and we seek to rid ourselves of it. But God never permits us to succeed completely in this; for which his name be praised! Even in Nero, believe that this testimony made itself sometimes heard. Even Philip II., who succeeded in committing certain crimes with tranquillity of heart, was disturbed by a secret discontent in his horrible

peace. Even in the savage, who leaves his father to die, or devours his prisoner, moral sense is not abolished. Here a remark is indispensable. In our thirst for casuistry, we introduce it every where ; to hear us, conscience is a collection of principles deciding in particular cases. Nothing of the sort. It tells us before all (and this is of vast importance) that there is good and evil, justice and injustice. Then it presents to us the leading notions of goodness, justice, sincerity, and devotion. It is, as it were, an index that always points out the right way.

It is this, and not a series of moral decisions. It is through having misunderstood this important point that men have sometimes procured the mournful satisfaction of discovering individuals — what do I say ? — peoples that are absolutely devoid of conscience.* Now I deny

* In this point of view, we are not to content ourselves with citing certain races of men ; we must cite the whole human race. In what did morality consist before Christ ? In what does it consist in the alas ! too extensive portions of our globe where Christ is not yet known ? Morality is sometimes presented as a truth naturally admitted, which would appear every where and always the same through the incessant variation of religions. Nothing is falsier. True morality, great morality, that which unbelieving philosophers seem to accept now in part, and which they use as a weapon against Christian dogma, was born of the gospel ; it has its date in history ; before Christ it existed no where ; since Christ, it penetrates every where. *Natural* morality is like *natural* religion ; the *natural* man is reputed to discover it alone ; unfortunately, he does

that there are such. Our series of moral decisions is not found, it is certain; the most essential rules, the most fundamental principles are lacking; but the index is found still pointing the same way. That there are cruel, abominable tribes, among whom repentance is unknown, I admit; nevertheless, what signifies the mysterious token among them of fear? Whence come those vague terrors of the soul which sometimes break out in a sort of worship addressed to the evil and inimical powers? Still more, how interpret the impression produced on the most obdurate by the mere sight of the family of the missionary? They neither comprehend nor listen to his instructions; they detest him, they combat him; yet scarcely is

not discover it until after the preaching of the apostles. Moreover, remark this, as soon as the apostles preach, as soon as true morality appears, conscience faithfully performs its office before it; even in the most wicked, even in the most hostile, even in those who fear and abhor this morality, even in the Felixes who will not hear of justice and temperance, and who exclaim, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;" even among them, the witness of God makes itself heard; the index marks the true direction. We can refuse our obedience (all morality has as many enemies as dogma); *we can not* refuse our assent; from the moment when the principle of humility and love appeared on earth, it has been permitted no one—I say no one—to fail to recognize its superiority. In our relations with moral sense, whatever comes of man has been corrupted by the fall; wherefore our consciences are so frightfully cauterized. As to moral sense itself, it is of God; it remains intact, and nothing can prevent it.

the spectacle of the Christian virtues displayed before their eyes, than the index points out the right way, the indestructible instinct pronounces its sentence, — “Yes; here is moral superiority; charity and equity are worth more than their opposites. It is true that we do not wish them at any price; but we are forced, while execrating, to render them secret homage.”

It is certain that cauterized consciences exist.* The impious and cruel man wins this detestable victory; he succeeds in vailing the conscience, as we, too, veil the written law; nevertheless, both laws, that within and that without, none the less subsist; the light continues to shine behind the veil; and when the latter is rent asunder, we shall see that it has lost nothing of its splendor.

The two laws both subsist, although their

* Yes; *cauterized*, whatever our pride may think of it! The corrupt heart leads us to accomplish many evil acts without any remorse, until the moment when, by the goodness of God, the question of the morality of these acts is at last placed before us. Then, and only then, the infallible witness within us protests against slavery, against torture, against anthropophagism, for aught I know. When this protest breaks forth, we strive not to listen to it; we shake it off, we stop our ears, we stifle the language of the conscience by the tumult of the passions; we succeed sometimes in forgetting it and hardening ourselves. Still oftener we hear it; we do not forget it; we know perfectly what it is necessary to do, and what it is necessary not to do; we are more *enlightened*, but not more *obedient*.

perception may be lessened in our rebellious hearts. They are present, living, divine, incorruptible. Their testimony, more or less heard, remains faithful.

There is good and evil; the evil is on the side of selfishness; the good on the side of devotion. This axiom at least remains, even when men have raised the thickest ramparts between their consciences and themselves.

They calmly accomplish the most odious deeds!—Let them alone; the elementary and indestructible notion of good and of evil, of devotion and of selfishness, will gradually accomplish its mission. The day will come when they will abhor what they formerly thought quite natural. The moral education of humanity follows a necessarily slow march amidst the obstacles created by evil passions; as conscience, instead of being a collection of sentences, is a standing protest in behalf of good, we do not learn every thing in an hour at its school. Men have eaten prisoners without remorse; they have possessed slaves without remorse; they have practiced intolerance without remorse; they have inflicted torture without remorse,—but conscience pursues its indefinite work. And let us not fancy that we are at the end; we ourselves, I am convinced, do many things

to-day without remorse which will arouse the indignation of our grand-nephews.*

It was incumbent on me, dear friends, to dwell on this subject, because it is little understood in general, and because it occupies a vast place in the question of conversion and happi-

* It is because the impersonality of the conscience was, in the first place, misunderstood, and that the character of a system of casuistry, a collection of principles, was afterwards attributed to it, that the supposition occurred of its perversion by the fall. Vinet says admirably, "The moral law, a body of notions, a composite object, which is combined on the one hand with sentiment, and on the other with external things, is for this very reason susceptible of alteration, and has suffered much since the fall of man. The conscience, a simple object, an elementary substance, *has remained intact*. It is nothing else than the sentiment of obligation in its greatest purity, its most perfect abstraction."

Talk to us with Vinet of the "sentiment of obligation," or with others of the "moral sense," nothing can be better; but do not talk to us of the "religious conscience," or the "Christian conscience," as some have done of late. This is to mingle at pleasure things which should remain distinct; that which is ourselves and that which is the witness of God in us; that which we appropriate on receiving it from without, and that which has not ceased to subsist within, despite our will; that which is altered by the fall, and that which remains intact; it is to confound "the body of notions, a composite object," with "the conscience, a simple object." No one, I presume, ever maintained that the body of notions has remained intact; not only of Christian notions, but of the simplest religious notions. I go further: moral notions come and go, darken and become clear, are lost and regained. Here the ravages of the fall have also been fearful, as complete as in the other parts of that indivisible unity which is styled the human self. But the witnesses of God within us, intellectual sense and moral sense, which protest against us in the name of the true and the good,—these witnesses are not perverted solely because we have opened the door to perverse notions; nor are they annihilated solely because we refuse to listen to them.

ness. To return to the knowledge of the truth, let us remember—this comparison throws light on every thing here—that conscience is a law. It is a law of the inner man; a law not given in detail, but which, placing before man the fundamental obligation of the just and the good, engenders special precepts one after another.

But to find one's self face to face with a law, whether external or internal, is not a merit, to the best of my knowledge. It is, indeed, rather the contrary; and the law accuses more than it exalts us. This is too much forgotten.

What would you think of the Israelites crying at the foot of Mount Sinai, "We are good, for we have now a law!" What you would say of them must be said of the man who dares cry, "Our fall has not been total, for the law of conscience subsists to condemn us."

Conscience is so little a merit that it often tells us with perfect clearness what conduct we should adopt, while we on our part resolve on one quite opposite. We are cognizant of this state, dear friends, are we not? A hundred times, a thousand times, on opening the Bible which I hold here, my conscience has forcibly approved what I have read in it; but the heart

came, and the will,—the self, in short ; and you know what then happened.

Not only does conscience condemn us, but, to the end, like the law, it is in many circumstances an incitement to evil. “The strength of sin is the law.” There are deeds, alas ! the sole attraction of which consists in being forbidden by the written law or the law of conscience.

To understand better what it says is not always the index of moral progress. The heathen to whom the gospel has been preached has henceforth, to use the expression, a much more enlightened conscience ; he knows much better what he is to do and what he is to shun. Will he be better for this ? Very often he will be worse, for he will act against his conscience ; the law, in becoming clearer, will have increased the power of sin and envenomed the rebellion of the heart.

This is so true that the enlightenment of the conscience is the first condition of unpardonable crime, of final rupture with God, of sin against the Holy Ghost.

Do you think that conscience does not dwell in hell ? No where, I am sure, does it speak clearer or louder. Is it not, as we have already seen, the formidable sting of wretchedness ?

Hardened souls will know beyond doubt that good is good and evil, evil. To know and not to desire, to know and not to love — is not this hell on earth? “The devils believe and tremble.”

It is important to preserve with extreme care the moral character of conversion; and we can only preserve it by maintaining the true *rôle* of the conscience. The impersonal witness of God in man and against man, it may hold a most faithful language while man does not cease to be plunged in sin. Satan knows his catechism; he marvelously distinguishes good from evil.

To what, then, are we called? What is it that the Scriptures designate “To have a good conscience”? Oh! it is not the state of the man whose conscience is enlightened, but that of the man whose conscience is obeyed. Obeyed or not, the law none the less subsists; but blessed are those of whom it can be said that it is at last engraved on the tables of his heart.*

* The reader will pardon me for having multiplied the notes in my second discourse; I feel the need of being clear and precise on a subject which has been obscured at pleasure. Besides, in default of the Bible, history is present to refute the two errors against which I have protested, and which amount to nothing else than denying, the one that man is a fallen being, the other that man is a responsible being. To those who pretend that the moral law is inscribed in full in all consciences, it suffices to recall the monstrous iniquities which have so long been practiced in all honor by the most honora-

The law, as you know, never suffices for this work. Neither revealed principles nor conscience will triumph over our depraved affections. It is the love of God in Christ that bows down the heart and subdues resistance. Through this we feel that we are wicked; through this we feel that we are loved; to contemplate the bloody cross, the expiation of our crimes, to hear a holy and gentle voice calling us each by name,—this it is that brings us back to God. To those who have truly passed through the school of conscience and the law, the accents of grace are irresistible.

Why do men strive to weaken them? Here, again, I am forced to point out in passing one of the obstacles which the tendencies of our Christian laxity oppose to the work of God on earth. I point it out; I do not discuss it.

Christ has borne our sins; his blood purifies us from all our sins; God has laid upon him the iniquities of us all. Such is the simple and naïve faith which Christians draw from their Bibles. If you take away from me ex-

ble men. To those who pretend that the moral sense has not remained intact, it suffices to recall the constant integrity of the testimony which it has rendered, in behalf of the moral notions indisputably held by heathen antiquity, of the great moral principles revealed by the gospel, and of the more and more extended applications which are daily made of these principles.

piation proper, if the Saviour is not a Saviour in the full sense of the word, what will become of me, feeling myself, as I do, still sold unto sin, and relapsing into it unceasingly? Before the union of God is wrought, the forgiveness of God must embrace me; before sanctification begins, justification must be finished; it is only as a child of God that I shall put on the feelings of the heavenly family. And how shall I feel myself a child of God if my individual forgiveness is not uttered, if my individual reconciliation is not wrought, if the death of Christ brings nothing but a sort of general reconciliation between heaven and earth, if it only reopens to me the way to heaven, and permits me to save myself, if instead of my own salvation, you announce to me the elevation of humanity?

Thank God! I see more than this accomplished in the mysterious sufferings of Golgotha and Gethsemane. He has borne our sins, and for this reason he has also borne our *sorrows*; he has taken upon himself our *weakness*; he has procured us happiness by securing to us forgiveness.

Conscience and the law, grace and the cross,—are these all, dear friends? Are they enough?


No. Our fall is so deep, so complete, that these two means united do not suffice to elevate us. The God who shows us our wretchedness, and who gives us his own Son, must also give us the Holy Ghost. What he does for us would be useless if what he does in us were not added.

Would that I could paint vividly enough the importance of the much misunderstood work accomplished by the great Comforter!

• This alone renders us capable of understanding what God says, of seeing what God does, of accepting what God offers. If our conscience troubles us, if the sacrifice of Christ moves us, if the Scriptures sometimes find the way to our souls, if salutary and holy sorrows sometimes break forth within us, if a presentiment of true joys appears to us, we owe it to the Holy Ghost. How shall we, sinners, accept the gospel, unless the Spirit "open our hearts"? How shall we come to Christ unless the Spirit accomplish the solemn promise, "He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you"?

V.

CONVERSION THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

UFFER me to contemplate at leisure this marvelous work of the Holy Ghost,—the work within. Let us study well the inmost travail, the profound crisis through which conversion is wrought, especially the noble sufferings which precede and engender noble joys. Let us see in what manner the Holy Ghost, speaking to our souls of the condemning law and the expiating sacrifice, opening our ears to the warnings of the conscience and the invitations of grace, renders us unhappy through the salutary unhappiness which is nearly allied to holiness.

Why did not Peter, on the mountain, know what he was saying? He dreamed of happiness before suffering, of rest before labor. Decidedly, the gospel has no more admirable, more divine feature than its doctrine of happiness and misery. Consult all religions, read all the philosophers, you will discover none that recalls, far or near, the paradoxical words, “Blessed are they that mourn.”

I am mistaken ; you will find them with an ascetic signification. Suffering for the sake of suffering, war declared against matter, the body, the enjoyments of this world. We know, dear friends, what we are to think of this, and I need not revert to it. How different are the declarations of my Saviour,—“Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice ; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

Sorrow turned into joy—this is the great metamorphosis of the gospel ; it is the painful deliverance of the woman that struggles and groans, then rejoices that a man is born into the world. See the souls that have known the beneficent terrors of the law, that know by experience the cost of daily struggles against sin,—see them ; they are happy and active, they go forward, they fight, their felicity is energetic and virile, it is allied to progress, to development, and—why not say it ?—to repentance.

Yes, travail and its pains ; yes, repentance and its shame ; yes, the battle of life and its wounds—these, by the action of the Holy Ghost, open our hearts to the divine joys of the redeemed.

The route is narrow and rugged. A tale of Hawthorne* represents to us in a striking form

* “The Celestial Railroad.”—TR.

the conduct adopted by those who aspire to facile happiness, who pretend to gain the joys of piety without having known its sufferings, who, in a word, wish to reach heaven without incommoding themselves. There are *express trains* which lead to it; the point in question is to take the shortest way to salvation; to believe this, to practice that, to take a seat in the car. Behold the vast crowd gliding lightly over the track; they advance under full steam, without labor or care. They are contented, they jest, and point the finger of scorn at a few travelers who, neglecting the railway, persist in following the narrow, stony foot-path, — the path of past ages. Poor pilgrims, who know not how to profit by new inventions! behold them, staff in hand, weary and covered with sweat, toiling slowly onward through thorns and flint-stones. Stop; one falls, and rises again, bruised and bleeding; and the men in the car laugh, at the very moment that they are all about to perish by a frightful accident.

Heaven is reached only by the foot-path. There must be holy sorrow for sin; there must be the weight of condemnation for us to thirst for salvation. "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit." You know the sorrows of the Psalmist, the sorrows which alone explain his joys:

“My sin is continually before me ; against thee, thee only, have I sinned.” You have heard the cry, “Mine iniquities are gone over my head : as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”

There are sufferings which are our true titles of nobility : to look at the heavens, to aspire to ascend to the highest place and feel that we remain in the lowest ; to obtain a glimpse of the ideal and live in the mire. Happy those who thus sometimes grieve and bewail their faults rather than their misfortunes !

Men may indeed grieve in two ways with respect to sin — some deplore the consequences which it must involve ; others deplore the sin itself. I need not tell you which of these afflictions is recommended us by James when he exclaims, “Be afflicted and mourn and weep ; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

Mourning and heaviness, then deliverance, — such is the order established, not only in the Scriptures, but throughout the strata of the moral world. It is in this sense, dear friends, that Peter says to all of us, “He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin,” and

that Paul, expressing the same thought, adds, "He that is dead is free from sin."

To die, to suffer in the flesh, that is, in the old man; to endure the absolute submersion spoken of by the prophet, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;" to descend to those "lowest depths" whence true prayers arise; to feel one's self wedged between evident duty and voluntary powerlessness, between conscience and the fall; to remember that in our Father's house there is bread to spare, and to die of hunger,—this it is that makes the humble, the poor, the little children, to whom Christ renders forgiveness; this it is that makes the thirsty souls who sigh after God "as the hart panteth after the water-brooks."

We suffer greatly thus. And how are we delivered? On one condition, always the same,—we must return to our Father's house; we must say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Every conversion implies a confession, or rather a series of confessions. He that does not confess himself to God can find no consolation; hearts that open themselves alone are tranquilized. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old. . . . I said,

I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

I speak — need I say ? — of a sincere confession ; of a confession that accompanies a true repentance. There are many kinds of repentance. Judas was bowed down unto death beneath the weight of his sin ! yet there was in him neither conversion nor repentance.

Let us be rigorous towards ourselves, our sadness, and our repentance. The road to happiness is strewn with conflicts. I have spoken of that of conversion ; I must now also point out those which are destined to follow it, and to endure till the close of life. The work of the Holy Ghost is not completed. The more deeply it has made us feel the action of grace, the more incapable it renders us of henceforth enduring the evil that dwells within us. Now, sanctification is not the work of a day. The tempter redoubles his efforts. So long as we belonged to him, he left us almost at peace ; we had within us a sort of harmony and disgraceful unity. Now there is discord ; two principles oppose each other ; the real struggle begins.

Hence arises the fact, strange at first sight, which scandalizes many Christians ; they feel themselves less at peace, in some respects, than

they were before being born again. To tell the truth, they have entered a way in which they will still encounter many conflicts and toils.

The vocation of a Christian is no sinecure. Peace, marvelous peace, is conquered therein daily by war; happiness, immense happiness, is found therein at the cost of more than one sorrow. A Christian soul must be strong; valor is the distinctive quality of the soldiers of Jesus Christ. The gospel tempers characters; it teaches us to conquer and to conquer ourselves, to detach ourselves from ourselves, to do violence to ourselves, to bring back to the right path a soul that continually strays from it.

In the strength which God gives us, there is wherewith to endure labors, there is wherewith to support the burden and heat of the day, there is wherewith to till the field within us and around us. "The husbandman that labor-eth must be first partaker of the fruits."

Meanwhile, the Holy Ghost teaches us to relish that saying, the sweetness of which neither life nor eternity will exhaust: "My son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

What saying can be placed by the side of

this, either to abase, or to lift up, to sanctify, or to give happiness? Ah! if we fully knew the “gift of God,” we should also fully know the joy of his salvation, and the spirit of deliverance would sustain us.


It would sustain us; and not only would we go on from joy to joy, but from strength to strength; a stronger would conquer the “strong man” that rules us.

The Bible announces to us two kinds of deliverance; woe to us if we desire but one! After the deliverance from condemnation, comes the deliverance from sin itself. Christ has ransomed us from our “vain manner of living.”

Ransomed, we shall be happy. I am strongly tempted to describe here the feasts of the soul, the felicity of progress, the earnest pleasures of obedience, the sweetness of filial abandonment, the peace of life in God. These are ravishing, even to him who perceives them too rarely and too far off, who divines rather than tastes them. I am tempted to expatiate on them; but I must scrupulously confine myself to the portion of our subject which we are studying to-day.

VI.

THE CONDITIONS OF HAPPINESS ANNOUNCED IN THE BEATITUDES.

 CAN not better complete what I have striven to say to you than by turning back to the beatitudes of the gospel, to those beautiful sayings of Christ which I read to you in the beginning.

Would you know the conditions of happiness? Ascend the mountain with me, and listen to the voice that repeats there, “Blessed! blessed! thrice blessed!”

“Blessed are the poor in spirit! — Blessed are they that mourn! — Blessed are the meek! — Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness!” In this first part of the beatitudes, the Lord essentially characterizes the frames of mind which precede and pave the way for conversion.

The poor in spirit are by no means the narrow-minded. Christ does not here connect Christian happiness with mediocrity or ignorance. The foolish, the ignorant, who reject

conversion and plunge into frivolity are assuredly not rare; and no more rare, thank God! are the strong and enlightened intellects who experience at once disgust of the world and love of the gospel. The point in question is not, therefore, to declare war upon science or intellect, to fetter any species of lofty development to which Christianity calls us,—Christianity, that wishes a full life and complete men. Augustine gives a fine definition of joy, “Joy by truth.” Yes; by truth, by light; all are connected and bound together in the heavenly point of view,—truth, light, life, and happiness.

There is room in heaven both for the learned and the ignorant, on condition, I grant, that both shall be “poor in spirit.” Poor in spirit; that is to say, humble and simple and meek (for I am forced to anticipate here; between the poor in spirit and the meek, these two classes of happy beings, the relation is such that I will not separate them). Meek, simple! what an admirable arrangement? How should we attain the faith without it? The poor in spirit are straightforward; they seek neither many difficulties nor much speaking; they take themselves as they are, and also take the word of God as it is. Now, dear friends, the abuses

of analysis have made so many ravages among us, the scalpel has destroyed so much happiness, that among all the courses of conduct perhaps which I would wish to recommend to you, none appears to me more important in the question which occupies us than this: Let us be simple, let us love Christ with simplicity, let us enjoy the blessings of God with simplicity, let us endure our trials with simplicity; amidst blessings and trials let us be Christians, or in other words, happy with simplicity.

We often lack nothing, in order to be joyous, but a little more simplicity in Christ. The meek are rare, the poor are rare; in spirit, in our own eyes, we are always disposed to believe ourselves of importance; and in this manner we come to discuss, dissect, and remold the gospel; to dry up life. Our pride sets itself up in opposition; it will not suffer us to be poor, it will not suffer us to mourn.

To mourn, to feel our wretchedness, to walk torn by the thorns of the law, to mourn under the weight of condemnation,—all this is impossible so long as we esteem ourselves. I will not dwell on that salutary suffering, dear friends, which has so continually occupied our attention in this discourse that it might almost pass for a commentary on the text, “Blessed are they

that mourn." We have seen that to know the delights of the gospel, it is necessary to have known austerity; those mild forms of Christianity, those worldly species of Christianity, which impose no real sacrifices, which exact no complete change, and, to say the whole, which exempt us from conversion, — those lenient systems of Christianity are cruel ones. The rigors of the gospel are the salt of the gospel. "Out of the strong came forth sweetness." The riddle of Samson is constantly set to us. Have we resolved it? Do we know this infinite sweetness; the honeyed rays which come from "the strong"? Have the law and the conscience waged their rude war against us? Have we passed, do we still pass daily, through internal struggles? Are we, in a word, of those to whom Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn"?

Then are we also of those to whom he said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." As it is difficult to distinguish perfectly between the poor in spirit and the meek, so it is impossible to establish any separation whatever between the mourning and the hungry. Who are they that hunger after righteousness if not those that feel themselves devoid of righteousness in themselves?

I have naught but sins ; I am wretched, I am condemned, I condemn and detest myself. Ah, what hunger and thirst do I feel ! what hunger and thirst for grace, pardon, light, life, and liberty ! How I will fall on my knees, and stretch out both hands to catch the living waters that gush forth in eternal life !

If the first beatitudes seem to relate chiefly to the frames of mind which pave the way for conversion, and consequently for happiness, the last seem to refer chiefly to the frames of mind which follow it, and which are created by faith. On hearing the Saviour exclaim, "Blessed are the merciful ! Blessed are the pure in heart ! Blessed are the peacemakers ! Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake !" I hear him exclaim, "Blessed are they that believe !"

To believe, to have given our heart, to have set foot upon the rock, to have escaped the miseries of skepticism, the "perhaps" and "I hope," to have substituted for the unnatural servitude of sin that holy dependence which is the liberty of the children of God, to read the Bible as an infallible revelation, to take the great doctrines as they are given,—the fall, salvation, holiness, happiness, in short, which is

weakened in proportion as the other doctrines are weakened,—to possess that peace of the humble which escapes dangerous curiosity and pretends to know nothing beyond what is written, to have a Father, a Redeemer, and a faithful Comforter, to have them in life, in death, and in eternity,—what is this if not to have entered the new state which is opened to us by conversion, the state in which we became capable of being merciful, pure in heart, peaceful, indomitable witnesses of justice?

Alas! we should be such; are we? Are we at least, in some measure? This is a humiliating but necessary question, which we must often put to ourselves; for we are always prone to be satisfied with appearances, vain forms, fleeting impressions, emotions, and illusions. The whole teaching of Christ, always directed to the practical consequences of faith, paved the way for the great warning of James, “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”

Where are our works? We declare ourselves happy in believing, and we are right, if we indeed believe. Do we believe? that is, do we live? Would the Lord, who sees us and reads our souls, say of you, of me, “Blessed is this man!”

Are we merciful? Then it is well with us;

we are happy ; “mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” By nature, we are austere, harsh, and unforgiving, and even among the gentlest, that amiable quality which is styled natural goodness bears no resemblance to mercy. It certainly has its charm and value ; it is pleasant to live near those kindly men who radiate about them as it were an aureola of loving sympathy ; nevertheless, natural goodness transforms itself into mercy only when the profound work of conversion is accomplished. Vinet says, “Take away duty, and temperament remains.” But mercy is goodness impregnated with duty ; goodness which dwells side by side with conscience, which knows that “charity is a part of justice,” which is anxious for the soul, which does not confine its solicitude to things of the present time, which regards every thing from the standpoint of eternity. Mercy has all the gravity of a moral fact, yet, nevertheless, preserves (when it is what it ought to be) the grace which belongs to spontaneous impulses, to the instinctive delicacy of loving hearts. It accomplishes miracles of which natural goodness is incapable ; it has pity on the wicked, while detesting the wickedness ; it pardons offenses, not through caprice, but through a renewed will ; it overcomes evil by good, but does not confound them

in a weak condescension toward all acts and principles. Mercy descends direct from heaven ; it dwells only among those who feel that they have been the subjects of mercy. Mercy offers to our eyes one of the greatest spectacles that it is permitted us to contemplate on earth.

Are we pure in heart ? Then it is well with us ; we are happy. Pure in heart ! If there is a saying which forces me to commune with my own heart and feel the need of free grace, it is this. Indeed, without a radical change, we could not declare that purity dwells within us. "The imagination of man's heart," it is written, "is evil from his youth."

Are we peacemakers ? Then it is well with us ; we are happy. To make peace, we must possess it. See the true peacemakers ; they diffuse peace around them, because their heart overflows with it. It is sweet to dwell in their neighborhood and under their roof. Union, affection, mutual confidence, spring up there as of themselves ; yet, discussions are not suppressed, problems are not avoided. Every thing is free, sincere, and virile, but permeated with the spirit of love and meekness.

Finally, are we of those who, if need be, endure persecution for righteousness' sake ? Then it is well with us ; we are happy. And who,

then, is ready to accept veritable opprobrium, to accomplish true sacrifices? who, if not he that has been born again? It is easy, dear friends, to exclaim, with Peter, "Although all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. God permits his children to suffer with him. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him."

All this is happiness, because all this is liberty; none is happy but he that is free. Pity the poor slave, pity the unfortunate that is under the mastery of his passions, — ambition, avarice, envy, and the frightful egotism which, under so many forms, devastates our hearts and lives. The passions doom us to suffering, to *drudgery*; the word expresses and the experience of each one of us confirms it. Oh! who will give us to break our chains (all our chains), — those surviving passions, those adroitly-contrived reservations which are the true obstacles to our happiness? Who will give us to be like unto trees planted by the brook-side, "which yield their fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade"?

I have finished; yet I can not restrain the

impression of a feeling which weighs on my heart, and perhaps, also, on yours. We have meditated on the word, so great and so sweet, which Christ uttered eight times on his entrance upon his earthly ministry, as if to point to the end to which he wished to lead his redeemed; we have repeated, and again repeat, "Blessed!" Yet, what lies hid in the depths of our souls? Let us confess it, — discontent.

The other day, I endeavored to paint to you the discontent of worldlings; to-day it has been my duty to paint — shameful task! — the discontent of Christians themselves. We have a habit of murmuring in secret with respect to God; we have a spirit of judgment with respect to men. Yes, among brethren, in the bosom of the most evangelical churches, are met many murmuring and discontented Christians.

Why is this, dear friends? Because we spend too much time in examining others, and examine ourselves too little. Others do not love us enough! Others do not visit us enough! Others never do enough for us!

And we — do we do enough for others? It is thus, thus only, that the question should be put; and thus put, far from bringing forth murmuring, it would produce humiliation, gratitude, and peace.

I know well, that of all the lessons of the gospel, the last which we consent to receive is that which teaches us to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." This is the last lesson, unless it be that which follows after, "Consider others as more excellent than yourselves!" — At the bottom, our discontent is composed of unreasonableness and pride. Christ came to destroy these things; when the angels celebrated his birth, they did not sing alone, "Peace on earth," but added, "Good-will to men." Without good-will, there is no peace, no happiness.

We are to become meek, that is evident; if meekness is one of the most necessary preparations for faith, it is also one of its most savory fruits. Perfect Christians are meek, and the meek are happy. There are inexhaustible sources of peace in that indulgent and gentle frame of mind through which our soul preserves its ingenuousness, through which it loves and trusts with simplicity. The meek always find that too much is done for them; and because of this, the meek will have "joy in the Lord."

Thus, true rest appears before our eyes; a rest which is not inaction, which harmonizes with labor, conflict, and progress, and which

comprises at the same time the inexhaustible delights of trust in God and brotherly love. "The Spirit of the Lord leads them gently, like flocks descending to the plain."

But I pause. This relates to the last part of our study, — the possession of happiness.

III.

The Possession of Happiness.

The Possession of Happiness.



F God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels,

nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." — ROMANS VIII.

We have arrived, dear friends. The work of conversion is accomplished, true happiness is secured on the day that we can utter humbly, but firmly, these glorious words, by the side of which human language can set nothing: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

More than conquerors! And in all things! Seek a more triumphant security, a surer peace, a more stable foundation of happiness! Thus the apostle, from the recesses of his fortress, seems to defy all the attacks of his enemy. Who shall accuse? Who shall condemn? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Let tribulation come, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword; let death come, or life, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present, or things to come, — nothing, no, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Man has taken refuge in the forgiveness and

love of God. The sparrow has really found her house, and the swallow her nest. Our house, our nest is here ; we are at home. How good it is to be here ! What a shelter we find beneath the Eternal arm ! How we feel that we were made for this. So long as we wandered afar off in our rebellion, in our vain pleasures, a mortal sadness — a sadness which was the gift of God and the persistent entreaty of God within us — unceasingly weighed upon our hearts. In our best hours, our joy was like that of the melancholy harvesters of Leopold Robert ; oftener, like fishermen preparing for sea, we hardened our souls to brave our fate.

Thus acted the most valiant and generous. As to the rest, we have seen their story, and know what reliance to place on their happiness. Now, all is changed. What sin had destroyed, grace has again established ; man has returned to his origin : the divine image, so long effaced, reappears on his brow. Now, the invitation, which before seemed a bitter jest, can be addressed to him, “ Be always joyful.” Now he can hear the salutations of the risen Lord to his disciples without finding them strange, — those salutations so sweet, so full of triumph and promise : “ Joy be unto you, joy and peace be with you ! ”

To be happy is not only the privilege of Christians, but also their duty. Yes, as we too often forget, the absence of joy is disobedience, ingratitude, unbelief. "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing." These songs resound too seldom among us; we do not know how to relish and diffuse happiness sufficiently. Our long study will not have been wholly lost if it has taught us first to feel our wretchedness, then to comprehend our felicity,—if it has taught us tears and thanksgivings.

You understand, dear friends, that I do not impose on you a stereotyped joy in behalf of God. Away with liveries! we want none of them. We no more desire a jargon of joy than of faith, of humility, or of repentance. It is natural, it is right, that the felicity of the children of God should be as varied as their destiny. Here gentle serenity; there ardent aspirations; elsewhere serious, austere joy, sparkling as through tears; further on, that frank gayety to which I have already rendered homage, and the lawful place of which should be clearly marked among us,—all will be holy, if all are simple, without preparation or resolve, if all express the true sentiments of a soul that has given itself to God, and can thereby brave tribulation and

distress with the apostle, but nevertheless feels their painful pressure ; for our heavenly Father does not send us trials that we may remain insensible to them.

This brings me to consider one of the most important and least understood phases of Christian happiness.

I.

THE ALLEVIATION OF THE COMMON TRIALS OF LIFE.

I WILL make no delay in meeting fears that I know and comprehend. The afflicted distrust those hackneyed theories which seem to reproach them for their sorrow. It too often happens that heavy hands are laid rudely on quivering wounds. "Wipe your eyes, stifle your sighs; if sorrows and conflicts remain in your life, you are unfaithful." So say, or seem to say, certain preachers of the gospel.

I shall not hold such language to you, for it literally inspires me with horror. Nothing is so revolting to me as to see Christians rebuked for weeping. Ah! He who shed tears here below over the obduracy of his adversaries, and also, let us not forget, over the afflictions of his friends,—he does not, indeed, give us in this sense the command, "Rejoice without ceasing."

This is so true that the subject of happiness might be treated from this pulpit by a weeping Christian. Better than any other, perhaps,

would he tell us of true joy ; better than any other would he paint the luster of the soft rays which descend into the darkness of our despair, and descend thither directly from heaven.

We fancy ourselves dreaming when we hear it maintained, sometimes by enlightened and pious men, that faith banishes sorrow, that grief is even but a cause of joy, and that the command of the gospel on the subject before us must be sought in a verse of James, which is isolated from all the rest of the Scripture, in order to show comparisons which would complete and clear up the interpretation, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

Before examining the meaning of this passage (and, indeed, to comprehend it, it is only necessary to read to the end), I turn to you, dear friends, and ask whether there is any one in this assembly, any Christian more advanced, more spiritual, than the rest, who has succeeded, not only in finding a subject for all joy in the thought that the trial comes to him from God, and that by his grace it will result in patience, but in discovering that the trial is not a trial, that it contains neither bitterness nor sorrow.

I am ignorant of the circumstances of your

life, yet I know this, — Before me, on the right and the left, are sorrowing, bruised, and mourning souls. There are wounds here which a Father's hand has made, but which nothing can heal; they will always gape; the potent consolations of the gospel pour balm on them, but do not prevent them from bleeding. The sufferers will go on thus unto the end, — bruised, mutilated, wounded in what they held dearest; all the joys of earth will henceforth be shrouded in mourning.

As long as I have known Christians, I have seen them weep. Sufferings are not spared them; it might be said that the judgments of God begin in his house. And often trials do not come alone, but aggravated by unexpected complications. By the side of great sorrows rise up the petty vexations, cares, anxieties, and difficulties of life; we might have endured sorrow, we succumb to difficulties. Then it is that the whole soul is invaded, and that “deep calleth unto deep at the noise of His water-spouts.”

Yet we are told that it is the privilege of the Christian not to weep! It is far different, far greater, far richer, as we shall see, dear friends. Let us finish our task of bringing forward facts and opposing them to this gross theory. The gospel is not a system suspended in mid-air;

if it reaches heaven, it rests on earth ; it rests there firmly, clinging every where to facts and setting value on realities. Let us beware of building in the clouds !

Yes ; the sufferings of common life exist among the children of God. Neither separations, nor bereavements, nor poverty, nor diseases are to them, by themselves, subjects of joy. They know the sorrow, bitter above all others, of the coldness of those we love ; “ the more loving, the less loved.” They know that other sorrow, — powerlessness to do good.

And that sorrow styled weariness of life, — do you see that Christians are preserved from it ? Is it not true that many among you have experienced the lassitude which seizes us when the springs of life wear out, when labors accumulate, when vigor disappears, when a daily burden, exceeding our strength, has in some sort exhausted us ? The sickness of thought has gnawed upon you ; your physical energy has disappeared perhaps before the time ; heart-rending experiences have dissipated the illusions of former years, and now you lie bowed down, dejected, and old.

Ah ! I hasten to give the complement of my idea. The heart never grows old ; and those who have tasted that the Lord is good know

how to lay their burdens on him. There is an unconquerable youth among aged Christians ; “ they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; ” their greenness, their faith, always strong, their life in God, their walk toward heaven, and, we may almost say, their entrance into heaven, — all these have nothing in common with the nerveless lassitude, the crushing strokes beyond hope or resource, the dull cares which come so soon to mark the decline of worldly careers. Nevertheless, this sorrow is also sorrow, this trial is also trial.

Trials are trials ; and I add, at the risk of passing for a Christian of low aspirations, blessings are blessings. Health, competence, the gifts of intellect, tranquillity of life, absence of great anxieties and sorrows, — all these are causes for thanksgiving. The apostle Paul prayed that his brethren might be cured, and entreated them to pray themselves that God would grant them “ a quiet and peaceable life.”

To believe certain theories, we should pray, on the contrary, for sickness, trouble, and persecution ! Is not every trial a cause of all joy ? As I have already remarked, we stop too soon in reading the passage. The third verse of James, to go no further, explains the second,

—“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” Such is the motive, and what Christian does not comprehend its importance? If the trial does not seem at first to be a cause of all joy; if it is not so in itself; if God strikes his child in order that he may feel it, there then is born “the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.”

The fruits of righteousness are a cause of joy; the strokes of the rod are not so. Let us be simple, dear friends; I counseled this last Sunday, I repeat it to-day. Jesus never said, “Weep not.” He said, on the contrary, “Weep with those that weep.” If once the words, “Weep not,” escaped his lips, it was to follow them by the command, “Young man, arise!” as he restored him to his mother. He forbids tears only in wiping them away.

Remember the beatitude, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad!” Rejoice, and wherefore? Because of persecution itself? No; but because “great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

What transpired in all the dungeons where the confessors of Jesus Christ rendered their

testimony? Were there neither tears nor sorrow because of trial? Do not believe it; there was real suffering; but, also, what joy! what a consciousness of the presence of God! what happiness in offering something for him who has given us every thing! what a near view of heaven! I remember that when I once enjoyed the privilege of entering the cell of a humble Christian,—who will forgive me for making respectful mention of him here,—imprisoned for the gospel's sake, I was struck with the simplicity with which these two equally legitimate and true impulses were manifested in him,—that which makes us feel the weight of the trial, and that which makes us discover in the trial the cause of “all joy.”

Peter did not write to the persecuted of his time, “You must not suffer.” He wrote, “But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye . . . for it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing.”

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews,—sympathetic, humane, a stranger to the refinements of a false spirituality,—uses the same language. He acknowledges that his brethren have endured “a great fight of afflictions.” He then adds, “Ye took joyfully the spoiling

of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

This rejoicing in sacrifice, even when it is most grievous, when it is accomplished for the love of Christ, with the eyes fixed on eternal felicity, every Christian can, if not feel, at least comprehend. It is in this sense that Paul says to the members of the church at Colosse, "I rejoice in my sufferings for you;" he who does not hesitate to render thanks because the Lord has "delivered him out of the mouth of the lion;" he who does not think himself bound to pretend that his sufferings were not sufferings. They were most painful and real, but he glories in them as a soldier in his scars. "In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews, five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned." And all these things were really positive afflictions to him, for he likens them to the moral afflictions caused him by anxiety for the churches or by the fall of his brethren.

There is no sorrow among the redeemed, because their trials lose the character of trials in becoming the occasion of all joy!

Ah ! I see the noble servants of God who in all trials have felt in their souls the mysterious encounter of joy and pain ; who have loved much, hoped much, enjoyed much, and who at the same time have mourned much, suffered much, bent beneath the burden of life, arise to protest against this. — Follow Moses in the long journey through the desert ; question Elias as he departs alone, proscribed and execrated by his people ; measure all the weariness and dejection contained in the second epistle to Timothy ; listen to the valiant Luther at the time when his strength gives way, when the difficulties of his great work seem to rise up in battle against him, when the cross which he bears bruises his shoulders. Furthermore, look around you ; among the humblest Christians, in the simplest lives, where there is no appearance of heavy and gigantic responsibilities, do you discover a single man, — even one, — who does not think that trials occasion suffering ?

Jesus himself did not think so. He did not console Martha and Mary by saying to them, “Sorrow is joy ; wipe your eyes ; you are exceedingly happy.” He did better ; he wept with them. — And, as regarded himself, in the accomplishment of his voluntary sacrifice, did his love banish pain ? I ask those who have

seriously fixed their thoughts on the mysterious agony of Gethsemane, What is the cry, thrice repeated, "My Father, if it be possible!" If it be possible! Oh, how bitter is this cup, how repugnant! how painful this suffering! The man Jesus who prays thus is like us in all things; like in all things except sin, let us not forget. To suffer his sufferings is not therefore to sin.

I am almost ashamed of having reminded you of such things; but it is necessary to do this, and firmly, for, under the pretext of rising to sublime heights, men excuse themselves, according to custom, from fulfilling the most ordinary duties. In this amended gospel we recognize our old enemy,—selfish Christianity. Who will ever say that there is barrenness at the bottom of the mystical impulses and the mutilations of asceticism?

Stoics, whether Christians or not, are always the same; to banish suffering, they begin by ridding themselves of heart. God has sent a great trial; he has sent it that it may be felt; that it may do his work; our first care is to rid ourselves of it. The deep affection which we can no longer enjoy on earth becomes to us a broken idol. We seek to "detach ourselves

from creatures," and we succeed but too well, for it suits us to be quickly consoled.

Do you not recognize here that false spirituality which makes itself more spiritual than the Bible,—the true means of being less so? Do you not recognize that pretended Christian happiness which appalls and chills us? Yes; I feel chilled in contact with these lives in which all is dry and brittle; in which nothing human seems longer to subsist; in which the heart has ceased to beat. Retirement, indifference, absorption in God, every thing seems arranged to offer the least possible power to strokes of grief. The point in question is not to suffer, not to weep.

The apostle, writing to his afflicted brethren of Thessalonica, put the question very differently; he did not entreat them not to weep, but to weep in a different manner. "Sorrow not even as others which have no hope." This is the simple and divine truth. As a mixture of wine and myrrh was offered to Christ on the cross, so the world always presents to us the fatal and shameful remedy of stupefaction in the hour of sorrow. Christ refused; let us also refuse.

How beautiful are the consolations of the gospel when they transfigure sorrow instead of

extinguishing it ; when they soothe the wound without closing it ! How pleasant it is to approach, with sympathy and respect, those loving and deep feeling souls who know how to mourn in Christ ; who regret, who remember ! There all is true, in suffering and also in happiness. Christian happiness needs truth ; it is founded neither on aridness, nor selfishness, nor forgetfulness.

Forgetfulness, that treason toward loved ones, forgetfulness, that second winding-sheet of our dead, we are to leave in its place, among the most humiliating miseries of the depraved heart.

The methods of piety are very different. It does not lessen the man, but enlarges him ; it does not suppress the feelings, but directs them toward heaven ; it does not profess selfishness, but throws itself, heart-broken yet trusting, afflicted yet happy, into the arms of a heavenly Father. Follow with me, dear friends, this marvelous education of a soul that learns to find in every trial "all joy."

In the first place, those that are exercised by this means look higher than themselves. Beyond the skies, they perceive Him who chastises through love ; they also see Him who endured

so great contradiction on the part of sinners. Lastly, they open their ear to the teachings of Him who bears the sweet name of the Comforter.

In him, and by the strength he gives, they learn to enter into the eternal designs of God with respect to us, and to regard their trials as a part of the order established for their salvation. At this point only, at these lights, they become fitted to say with the Psalmist, "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, for thou didst it;" or with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Do not ills and blessings proceed from him? And, moreover, is there any proportion between the sufferings of the present time and the glory that is to follow? In this feeling of filial abandonment, we go to God and tell him our sorrows. God wishes us to tell him every thing, — our sorrows as our sins. And with what kindness he hearkens to us! Is it not true, dear friends, that there are things we can speak only to him? The sympathy of men, even the best, is impatient and easily exhausted; God, on his part, never wearies, but listens to and comprehends all. Great, therefore, is the solace of the wretched, who, overwhelmed by the false

consolations of man, finding only reproaches where he hoped for compassion, meeting cold sermons instead of open arms and warm hearts, turns toward his Father's house and cries, "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high."

This witness is faithful; its testimony makes itself heard in the inmost recesses of our being, and, despite the injustice of the world, despite our woes and the weakness of our own souls, it continues to repeat to us through his Spirit, "Thou art my child; thou belongest to me, and none can snatch thee from my hand." Then, buoyed up and enchanted, looking back and beholding an uninterrupted series of aid and deliverance, we take a stone, like Samuel, and raise our Ebenezer, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

Hitherto, but he will do so no further. Courage, Christians! raise up the feeble hands and strengthen the feeble knees! And see! the children of God advance with cheerfulness, although "now for a season, if need be, in heaviness." They take care not to forget that the trial of their faith must "be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

In this manner is wrought the surprising

miracle, "In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." They are "sorrowful yet always rejoicing." It is given them to say truly and without vain declamation, "Though I be aspersed, yet will I rejoice;" or, which is perhaps more difficult and rarer, "Though the righteous smite me, I will esteem it a favor."

All things indeed must be made new, sorrow like the rest; it is "made new," not abolished. We have in some measure the power to abolish it, to retrench it, to pluck it out; but that of transforming it God reserves to himself. Therein is the finger of God.

What Christian has not experienced, in the moment of distress, the ineffable mercies which the Lord then pours forth to overflowing? A secret voice repeats to him the sweet promises which crowd to my lips: "Call upon me in the day of trouble." Yes, in that day, in that day more than any other, I will display my goodness in thy behalf. "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." "His anger endureth but a moment, in his favor is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." "Many are

the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."

The afflictions are as real as the deliverance is glorious. The same man that exclaimed, "Sorrows have entered my soul," will repeat, enchanted, the great promise, "He that feareth the Lord escapeth every thing."

The Lord feeds his sheep with his own hand. He "maketh them to lie down in green pastures;" he makes them taste the sweets of repose. Who can tell the meaning of this word, repose, — the sweet synonym of happiness? Who can tell all the joy that is contained in the certainty of the apostle, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us!" Yes, in all things; that is to say, in trials also. Trials are painful, they are bitter; but some one has loved us, some one has borne our sins on his body on the cross, some one opens to us, beyond the sufferings of life, the serene vistas of eternity, some one — the divine Mourner of Calvary — points to the sublime end to which our own afflictions may serve to guide us. We understand, we believe, we are more than conquerors.

II.

THE SPECIAL SORROWS OF THE CHRISTIAN.

WE have just seen—and the demonstration was important—that the Christian is not exempt from the sufferings common to humanity. I must now add that he has, in addition, his special sufferings,—sufferings which pertain to him as a Christian. Here again, sorrow is metamorphosed into a source of grace, but it nevertheless preserves its character of sorrow. I should imperfectly describe the happiness of faith if I concealed from you its bitterness. False happiness, that impossible ideal, leaves us cold and indifferent; and this must necessarily be, for we no longer recognize ourselves in it. It is no longer man, but some nondescript being, vibrating between heaven and earth; it is no longer life, but some destiny that is strange to us and can not affect us.

Honor to truth! it alone has power over our souls; and herein is found one of the great causes why the Bible moves us so deeply. As to those that deny our sufferings, they are not

far from also denying our sins; arrogating to themselves a right to honor, they are no longer willing to hear of conflicts or of errors, or of the law. Strange Christianity, that teaches us to revel, in our exaltation, in the weakness of those who are still conscious of the fall and of the sufferings of poor humanity!

In the time of the apostles, men were not so far advanced. The cry of Paul, "O wretched man that I am!" has rung through eighteen centuries. That preacher of forgiveness, of free grace, of firm assurance, and of joy in Christ, who feared no longer, as we have seen, either tribulations or famine, or the sword, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come,—that man felt himself wretched because he felt himself a sinner. And furthermore, another source of wretchedness assailed him without ceasing,—anxiety for the churches and for souls. Never was he greater than when moved at the thought of so many falls, when grieved at encountering so many errors; never did his faith shine forth more glorious and radiant than when, bruised himself by every blow that fell on the body of Christ, he took his share of sufferings, discouragements, and temptations.

We are not Christians if we do not experi-

ence these things. Far from rendering hearts more obdurate, conversion renders them tenderer, more sympathetic,—in a word, more vulnerable. There is a vast series of sorrows which gather together from every corner of the globe, on the part of Christians and of worldlings, about a child of God. As soon as he is pointed out, they flock to him; he becomes the confidant of many physical and moral sufferings; and what would you think of him, I ask, if such confidence in no wise disturbed his bliss?

I know men who imagine that sufferings do not exist because they are ignorant of and never inquire into them. To hear them, there are neither sick nor poor, and men rarely die in their neighborhood! Alas! on looking more closely, they will see want, sickness, and mortality rapidly increase about them.

You see, dear friends, the first source of special afflictions that gushes forth beneath the steps of the Christian. He participates more than others in the sufferings of his fellow-beings. But, above all, he feels more than others the poignant sorrow for sin. Because his sins have been freely and completely forgiven, he does not conclude that he is to forgive them himself. “Who will accuse?” said we, just

now. Who? I. Who will condemn? I. There is no longer any condemnation except that which my own heart pronounces, and this is aggravated, instead of weakened, by the mercy of God.

That tendency seems to me ignoble beyond expression which impels us to forget our baseness, to cease to struggle against the evil that dwells within us; in short, to strike out of a Christian life the work of sanctification and the sorrows of repentance. Perfect security, perfect happiness in a fallen and sinful state, is something revolting. How much more I love the holy anxiety that seizes upon our hearts when we have fallen, and constrains us to examine anew whether we are truly in the faith! Justification by faith — by faith alone — is indeed the immovable basis of the whole structure, and the child of God remains such in spite of his faults. What would the consequences be if it were otherwise? But his faults impel him to assure himself of the reality of his faith; they impel him to seek and seize the hand of the Saviour, always stretched out to him; to cry daily, "Forgive us our trespasses!" and often even to add, "Turn thou me, O Lord, and I shall be turned!"

Where is the convert — I mean the sincere convert — who has not at times implored his conversion on his knees ? My task would be a detestable one if, under the pretext of depicting the possession of happiness, I should efface the shadows from the picture. By their side, the lights appear only more brilliant. Do not fear, dear friends, that I shall in any wise diminish an incomparable felicity ; but I am anxious to be truthful, truthful to the end. We still inhabit the earth.

Now tell me, Christians, without mentioning the numerous and gross sins into which we fall unceasingly, do we not know those seasons of aridness, those barren frames of the soul which, without destroying a bond between God and us, which nothing can sever, seem at times to isolate us here below ? We walk then like Israel in the desert, with hearts inclined to rebellion, and — why not speak the word ? — *unhappy*. The assaults of doubt trouble us ; murmuring glides almost to our lips ; darkness and coldness creep over us ; we know no longer how to pray.

We still fall on our knees ; but it is no longer the prayer of old, — trusting, filial, ascending straight to heaven, — but languishing efforts ; our requests seem to fall back upon us. “Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our

prayer should not pass through." Thou hast bent thy bow "like an enemy."

What discouragements then! what falterings! what attacks of Satan! what wretchedness within and without! what questions creep into our hearts with respect to the Bible, with respect to Christ, with respect to God, with respect to salvation! How the certainty of the salvation of believers, the fundamental point of life, is suddenly shaken! How temptations come, one after another, disposing us to substitute holiness for justification and feeling for faith! How we set about considering ourselves instead of regarding the Lord!

There is here a trial, a formidable trial, which is reserved to Christians alone. They feel it, they ought to feel it, and what would become of them if, in this juncture itself, they were not "more than conquerors," through Him that loves them?

Those that suppress this, suppress, I repeat, one of the great phases of our moral uprising. As long as we sin, it is necessary that we should suffer. And do we not also suffer from the falls of our brethren, the unbelief of the world, the reverses of the church? Here again I en-

counter mountains of selfishness before me. It is shameful, it is appalling; and we all, I do not hesitate to say, have cause to blush in this respect.

Remember the prophet exclaiming, "Oh that mine eyes were a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Remember the Psalmist crying, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." Remember the apostle, lastly, writing to Timothy, "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel." They felt the special sufferings which are reserved for believers.

Nothing humiliates me more, dear friends, than to see how far they are strangers to us. I seek these "rivers of water;" I seek these eyes moist because of lost souls, but do not find them. I seek this partaking of the afflictions of the gospel, and discover that we accept peace and glory from the gospel without being willing to know its afflictions. We see multitudes standing alienated from the Saviour, and calmly shut ourselves up in the feeling of our own salvation, or in the resigned contemplation of the eternal designs of the Saviour. We see grave errors insinuate themselves among Christians, we see divisions break out among them,

and, satisfied with ourselves, we take sides in them, after having protested, perhaps, for the acquittal of our conscience. Even the dangers incurred by friends and relatives still strangers to the faith, move us but little.

This is horrible! it should cease. In all times, pious men have bewailed their "wounded unto death." The apostle, whose words we meditate upon, was "in mourning for those that had sinned." He experienced noble anxieties, as we have seen, with respect to the churches. "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?" Far from regarding heresies, sects, intestine commotions with a dry eye and heart; far from tranquilizing himself by the thought that God knows his own, he traced his warnings "to the midst of great tribulation and anguish of heart." He spoke "in tears" of those that walked as enemies of the cross of Christ.

This is the example to be followed. There is a blissful indifference which provokes disgust. I would not give a fig for that pretended Christian happiness which at once ignores sorrow for our own sins, for those of our brethren, for the obduracy of worldlings, and for the defeats of the gospel. "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me, while they

say daily to me, ‘Where is thy God?’ ” I pity those builders who have never felt the generous sorrows of Nehemiah, when the enemy exclaimed, gazing contemptuously at the battered ramparts of Jerusalem, “If a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.”

Such are the special sorrows of the faith; and, as you know, I have far from exhausted the list.

The time of triumph has not yet come; what I said two years ago with respect to grace, I repeat to-day with respect to joy,—away with barren theories that banish the law and sin! We are not about to establish ourselves at the same time in glory and in evil! The free pardon of God produces many other consequences; it leads us to watch, to fight, to have compassion, and, let us admit, to suffer.

But reassure yourselves; “in all things”—even in this—we are “more than conquerors;” wounds inflicted by a loving one lose their sting, and we are now about to see, in contemplating Christian joys, whether it is necessary to deny our sorrows to affirm our happiness. Ah! far from increasing it by such denials, we lessen it, we contract it to the miserable proportions invented by our selfish systems. What is

that happiness, I ask you, which begins by repressing the impulses of the heart and the protests of conscience? Poor, incomplete, and false happiness, which is left far behind by the happiness of suffering, bruised, repentant Christians, mourning their sorrows with those of the world and of the kingdom of God! The latter does not lose itself in the clouds; it dwells on earth, it feeds on truth,—truth every where; it is sympathizing, it is sanctified, and, moreover, so splendid that I might win many souls to a heavenly life, were it but permitted me to paint it vividly to your sight.

III.

THE JOY OF OBEDIENCE ; OF PARTICIPATION IN THE
WORK OF GOD ; OF FORETASTES OF HEAVEN.

HERE is a joy which contains the germ of all other joys,—the joy of salvation. To know that our sins—our own sins—have been nailed to the cross of Christ ; to know that we belong to our God for ever ; to measure with the eye that grace which adopted us before the stars were brought forth, and which will still hold us in its keeping when the skies of to-day shall have ceased to shine for us ; to contemplate that love which reaches, let me say, from eternity to eternity,—from the eternity that has gone before to the eternity that is to follow after,—is to feel our heart resume the normal position from which it was wrested by the fall. Henceforth, we have a father, a house, a family, a country, and we inhale with delight the fragrant odors of the zephyr that is wafted from heaven.

Now, from this common source of faith,—of faith in Christ the Saviour,—we shall see

all the joys which compose Christian happiness gush forth. The first — one of the purest and holiest — is the joy of obedience. What a day is that on which we feel for the first time that “his commandments are not grievous;” on which a new nature is formed within us; on which we begin to love what God loves; on which we cherish his law! But it is heaven on earth thus to “lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset;” to walk with the Lord in the light and toward the light!

“The children of obedience” (thus he calls them, and may we merit this glorious name!) advance, happy and confiding, by the paths of rectitude. Their best felicity they find in the accomplishment of duty. It is so sweet to do what we ought, and to do it humbly, without seeking for ourselves, referring all the glory to God! Do you know of any thing that equals this? Do not the fleeting moments in which we have obeyed in this wise remain as shining lights in our memory?

The problem of happiness will be resolved, the instant these moments shall be transformed into hours, days, life. The topmost summit is marked by this saying of Christ: “My meat and drink is to do the will of Him that sent me,

and to finish his work." Compare, dear friends, with this meat and drink, this happiness, the enjoyments of earth, earthy ; I do not say of the world only, but of selfish Christianity. Far from curtailing the law, Jesus contemplates, loves, and accomplishes it ; and his soul is fed. He realizes perfectly what the Holy Ghost has proclaimed by the mouth of the Psalmist : " I have set the Lord always before my face."

To set the Lord before our face — I know of no expression which better renders the attitude of the children of obedience. While standing thus, they feel themselves abounding to overflowing in true blessings, both within and without, which no one can snatch from them.

Faith continually brings forth joy. After that of obedience, we find another which closely concerns us, but which is, nevertheless, distinct in certain phases, — the joy of partaking in the work of God.

How beautiful is the study of the joys which Christ experienced during his earthly ministry ! Amidst so many moral sufferings, whilst contact with so many sins wrung from him the words, " How long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you ? " he had ecstasies, the mysteries of which I do not pretend indeed to fathom,

but in which the contemplation of a design of love, about to be realized, constantly appears. In these ecstasies of Christ are found condensed, as it were, the joys which the angels feel when a single sinner is converted. Here, by the glance of his divine eye which embraces all the ages, it is no longer a single sinner that is converted, but millions upon millions of souls, that he snatches from condemnation and misery. Look at our divine Master when “for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame;” look at him when he “rejoiced in spirit.” What is this image, admirable above all others, which has passed before him? Is it not the accomplishment of his work? He has seen Satan falling from heaven like a thunderbolt; he has seen the treasures of divine revelation closed to self-satisfied sages and opened to little children.

We may participate in the joys of Christ, since we are partakers in his work. We are called to this. Observe, dear friends, the full scope of the speech of Paul, in which he calls the Thessalonians his joy and crown, “on the day of the coming of Jesus Christ.” Yes, in that very day; yes, in the presence of God, when we throw aside our crowns, there will be a crown of glory for the apostle; when ever-

lasting joys take possession of our souls, there will be an especial joy for him ; — a handful of men from Corinth, Thessalonica, and Philippi will be there.

All this is unknown to selfish Christianity. If we know little of the tears of Paul, we shall know little of his ecstasies ; if the souls that are lost do not fill us with grief, the souls that are saved will not give us these foretastes of heaven.

We need these foretastes. When God wished to prepare an elect servant destined to act and also suffer above all others, he transported him to the third heaven. Those who have caught a glimpse of such things never forget them ; the divine imprint is not effaced, the capacity for obedience grows with the capacity for happiness.

We are made for obedience, we are made also for joy ; and these two elements of the moral life are not separated : without obedience, there is no true joy ; without joy, no true obedience. Now, what a distance there is (I appeal to all those that have begun to love Christ) between the labor of the slave that submits repiningly and the labor of the well-beloved

child that joyfully conforms to the will of his father !

The Book of Proverbs teaches us that wisdom has its “wages,” and that its ways are ways of “pleasantness.” If our way is not one of pleasantness, let us take heed ; it may be that we have not yet entered the school of wisdom. Those who visit it can exclaim with David, “My strength, I will praise thee with psalms ;” and this appellation — “my strength” — is to them a perfect designation of the God who freely places before us happiness by obedience and obedience by happiness.

IV.

THE JOY OF FAITH.

IT is good, dear friends, to be happy. It is sweet and healthful ; peace is as necessary to the health of our souls as to that of our bodies. I wish to make you feel the importance of this truth by surveying with you the leading acts of our moral life. We shall see faith and joy advance every where united, hand in hand. It seems as if many blessings were necessary to us, because we have many desires, but it is found, notwithstanding, that God suffices for all. With him, in true communion with our Saviour, our worship is illumined, our prayers become confessions, cries, conversations, thanksgivings ; the reading of the Bible gains a new relish ; sources of progress and happiness spring up every where under our feet ; we work well ; we hope strongly ; a radiant aureola shines resplendent about our duties, our affections, our studies, and our pleasures ; we feel that piety has promises for the present life as well as for that which is to

come ; we run without restraint, our eyes fixed on the ideal. But faith declines, joy becomes obscured, obedience fails, the fountains cease to flow, drought ensues, barrenness extends, and we are no longer fit either for the things which directly concern the kingdom of God, or for those which concern the common duties of life. Every thing is therefore bound up in the indissoluble union of these three great facts, — faith, joy, and happiness.

It has certainly happened to each one of you as well as to me, to open your Bible in one of the hours of spiritual drought which appear so often in the life of Christians. Then you have read, read through duty, so as not to depart from your habits ; but the book of God has told you nothing ; it has been a volume sealed with seven seals. The reading finished, to satisfy your conscience, you have hastened to forget a weary moment which you have rendered as short as possible. When, on the contrary, you have read in faith, what a change ! The Bible has again become the Book of books, which has comforted more souls, upraised more wretched beings than all other books together ; you have seen words every where addressed to yourself,

which seem to have been written but for you alone, so marvelously do they apply to the inmost needs of your soul ; it has told you what no man knew how to tell you ; it has warned, reproved, and strengthened you. Were you uncertain ? it has clearly shown you the way. Were you cast down ? it has come to you with its tender encouragements, with its magnificent promises ; it has opened to you the treasures of its grace and the splendors of its future.

“Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” The worship in which God is found is a joyful worship, a worship of gratitude, praise, and adoration. But what is the worship in which he is not found,—the worship to which we repair to follow the custom ? There are such kinds of worship, and many, as we all know.

And our prayers ! We have within our reach a means of daily, hourly, recruiting our supply of strength and happiness. Those mountains “from which help cometh” shine yonder, more dazzling and nearer than our Mont Blanc. When we look at them truly, when we truly implore the God of strength, “that is our life,” he leads us by smooth paths ; he fills us each morning with his goodness “that we may rejoice and be glad all the day long ;” he addresses to us the great admonition, “Fear

nothing." But how many prayers remain unanswered ! And why, dear friends ? Ah ! faith is lacking ; we have prayed ill, without buoyancy, without happiness. Yes, without happiness. We know the struggles of prayer, but few of the joys thereof. They should be great, notwithstanding. See, I will carry every thing to the feet of my heavenly Father, I will throw off all my burdens ; before laboring with my hands, I will labor on my knees ; I will combat sin ; I will resist the Devil ; I will penetrate into the understanding of the gospel ; I will open grace to souls to whom it remains closed,—the souls of my friends, of my neighbors perchance ; I will preach the gospel, I will give, or rather receive, for of myself I can do nothing, and it is for this that I ask in the name of Him who has said, " Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you."

Herein is indeed the secret of happiness. There is much peace in the spirit of prayer, there is much happiness also ; and these two things are linked together in veritable faith in Providence. I know of no word greater in itself, or more strangely debased by usage. Men speak of Providence to exempt themselves from speaking of God ; nevertheless, what is it

in reality? It is God who directs all things, both great and small; who on one side prepares written revelation, forms canons, raises up witnesses to the truth, watches over the affairs of the world, and holds in his hands the designs of kings, and who, on the other, presides over the most trifling details of our lives, supplies us with our daily bread, and does not suffer a sparrow to fall to the ground without his will. One of the discoveries of the other life will be to see that every thing, without exception, has been arranged for our good.

It will be one of the discoveries of the other life, and it is meanwhile one of the most real joys of this. "The Lord reigneth." This saying assumes a delicious significance in the thought and life of Christians. There is often more bitterness than sweetness in saying, in presence of events that crush us, "The Lord wills; none can hinder; we must submit."* But when this God is a tender father, resignation takes a better name; it becomes trust and peace.

* How many heathen beliefs we see still reigning among us! From the manner in which we often speak of God, of his will, of his providence, of necessary submission to his decrees, we might be taken for trembling worshipers of ancient *Destiny*. We exclaim, "God wills!" as we might exclaim, "Fate decrees!" We bow before an inflexible law, an immutable decree, a blind, deaf, and mute power.

It becomes happiness. I invite you, dear friends, to fathom for yourselves the depths of a surface which I can only skim over, the relations of happiness and faith in Providence. You will see how good it is to rest in filial dependence, how good it is to live on manna or daily bread.—Daily bread! Manna! Is there any thing more excellent? This bread is savory. It is sweet to feel that none of us, rich or poor, lifts a morsel to his lips that is not directly and absolutely given us by God, given this very day. This manna, indeed, is far from the tiresome food with which Israel was disgusted. To be in the hands of our heavenly Father, to know that the morrow will take care of itself,—this is so necessary to happiness that it is impossible even to conceive of happiness without it.

What would become of us, indeed, without faith in Providence? How many continual occasions of corroding care and anxiety would arise,—our interests, our future, our family, our friends, our works, our cause, our country, our fortune, and I know not what besides! It is, above all, at hours like this, when war is let loose, when the world is on the search for adventures, when every thing becomes possible, when the earthquake may extend from place to

place, and overthrow every thing, when we comprehend at last that we are to build our security neither on the uncertainty of riches nor on that of human guaranties, when human destinies seem to float at chance,—it is then that we feel the need of looking higher than men for causes of confidence and tranquillity.

Blessed indeed is he who, knowing that of himself he has deserved every chastisement, but looking toward the Father of mercies, feels himself protected and guarded! Blessed is he who by faith contemplates divine order through human disorder, and who, fitted to borrow the touching language of Nehemiah, says, in pursuing his journey, I have walked in the assurance “of the hand of my God which was good upon me!”

“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him: and he shall bring it to pass. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.” What the Word of God thus commands us is not inaction, but trustful labor.

And trustful labor is happy labor. One may labor all his life for truth and not have a moment of happiness. But as soon as the heart is opened to the simple faith of the little child,

labor becomes an ever-gushing source of joy. Faith and joy ; these two words present themselves anew in indissoluble union. Works of evangelization, works of charity, works of the closet, all put on a new aspect ; we are no longer alone, and, even in the inevitable discussions which arise between our brethren and ourselves, we feel, as it were, a refreshing breeze of affection, mutual respect, and common hope.

Hope, did I say ? Ah ! this must be mingled with every thing. Without hope, there is no happiness. We hope weakly because we believe feebly ; and this is why our activity is so far from serene, why even our beneficence is so little joyous. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come !" The expectation, the hope of Christ, gilds the horizon of believers ; the dawn already announces the day and awakens the sweetest thoughts in the soul still obscured by darkness. Perhaps we do not know how to see the dawn. Perhaps we do not know how to cry, on our part, with love, "Come, Lord Jesus, come !"


To those that believe, that pray, that labor, that hope, that walk with head erect and upright heart, all existence has put on a refulgent tint. As the world is skilled in finding weariness

ness at the bottom of its joys, so the gospel excels in placing happiness every where.

Take, dear friends, your family relations, your affections, your duties as citizens, your business, your professions, your studies ; I say more : take your pleasures, those legitimate pleasures, which we are to beware curtailing, and see what becomes of all these, the moment that God is with you. All change, all grow, all receive the seal of eternity.

V.

THE JOY OF UNION WITH GOD.

RE we at the end? No; faith has still something to teach us, or rather to give us. The work of happiness advances at the same time with the work of holiness. We have ascended far; we are about to reach the highest point that man can attain on earth. The last goal, the crown of felicity, is shown us in a radiant future, by the words, "God will be all in us."

And now this felicity begins for us. God, it is said, "draws our heart to him by its strings." He has made us for him, and it is in him alone that we find repose.

You understand me, do you not? In speaking of life in God, I by no means speak of loss in God. He does not invite us to lose ourselves, but, pardon me the expression, to win ourselves. More active than ever, freer than ever, free for the first time, we remain ourselves, but renewed, restored to our true nature, happy.

We are to leave absorption, that melancholy fact, to the enervating tendencies of quietism. Nothing differs from these more than the method employed by the Holy Ghost. One of its fruits, the Apostle remarks, is "joy." Have we received the Word "with the joy of the Holy Ghost"? Is there a sanctuary within us? Do we know those internal delights, that river of peace of which Isaiah speaks? Do we know what it is to "return to the Lord"?

Too often we stop half-way, and this is why Christians are only half happy. They cling to systems and ideas; they do not contemplate the person itself,—the adorable person of our God. Now, "in his presence is fullness of joy," and those that remain afar off can not be joyful. "*The heart of man is tormented,*" said Augustine, "*until it reposes in God.*" *

* Since I have cited Augustine, I refer the reader to the celebrated conversation with his mother related in the "Confessions." "One day, we were alone, she and I, leaning on a window which overlooked the garden of the house in which we dwelt, and from there, the mouths of the Tiber, on which, ere long, far from the crowd, after having recovered from the fatigue of a long journey, we intended to embark. We talked together alone, with great sweetness, forgetting past things and wholly devoted to those which are eternal." Behold the sublime canvas of Schoeffer; behold these two faces seeking heaven with the same glance, the one with grateful and triumphant joy as if entering the harbor, the other with a feverish and wearied joy,—a joy that has passed through tempests and is about to brave them anew, that foresees and remembers. Yet, nevertheless, it is also joy, and the two glances, so different yet so

I would that I were able, dear friends, to depict to you this repose, this life in God. To describe countries, it is necessary, not only to have caught a glimpse of them for a moment, but to have dwelt long therein. Ask those that have had this privilege,—ask them what sweetness and peace and strength and light there is in habitual communion with our heavenly Father, in unshaken faith in Jesus Christ!

They will tell you; yet you will comprehend little of it if you yourselves have not felt that the Lord is good. Indeed, this manna is “hidden manna,” and communion with God reveals all his secrets only to those that enjoy it. And again, all his secrets are not at once revealed; in a life with God, there are incessant discover-

like, attain the same light. God is there, before the mother and son; they both taste the felicity of souls that have taken hold of God. “And we sought between us, in the presence of truth, which is God himself, what would be the eternal life of the saints,—that life which the eye does not see, which the ear does not hear, and which can not enter the heart of man. Our conversation led us to the thought that the greatest pleasure of the senses, in the greatest brilliancy of this temporal light, is unworthy, not only to be compared with, but even to be named by the side of, the delights of this ineffable life. And elevating ourselves then with constantly increasing ardor to the good itself, we passed in review one after another all corporeal things, even to the sky, where the sun, moon, and stars shine upon earth. And we still ascended, meditating, celebrating, adoring the works of God, and thus arrived at our souls, but without pausing thereon, eager to reach the inexhaustibly fertile region of eternal life. We almost touched it for an instant, by a sudden bound of our hearts.”

ies to be made; indefinite vistas open; we go on from progress to progress, and from happiness to happiness.

See ripe Christians, those beautiful fruits of the gospel, gilded by the warm rays of the sun; see what passes within their souls. They have their trials, as I have not concealed; they have their falls and conflicts; but they suffer in God, they fight in God. It is in God that they walk on earth and advance toward heaven. They pray without ceasing; or rather, between their Father and themselves there is perpetual conversation. They tell every thing, they carry every thing to Him who is powerful and good. From day to day, they learn better to love what God loves, to wish what God wishes. Humble and simple, they lead the life of others, they participate largely in the affections, the duties, the joys, the pains of humanity; whilst the ideal life, the eternal life, has already begun for them. A secret voice repeats to them unceasingly the words of the gospel, Forgiveness! full grace! "Christ came to save sinners, of which I am the chief!"

And the delights contained in this saying are never exhausted. To love, to feel ourselves loved, to know that love is stronger than death, to see with our own eyes, by an inmost experi-

ence, that death is conquered, that he who belongs to Christ will never die; to break the bonds of sin one after another; to know the glorious liberty of the children of God; ah! what joy! what joy! Those who have experienced it comprehend the ardent expressions of the Canticles: "My beloved is mine and I am his. Oh fountain of gardens! well of living water, and streams from Lebanon!"

As I detest false enthusiasm and ecstasy, so I insist on in no wise curtailing the tenderness which unites the Church to her divine Spouse. The members of the Church can not remain strangers to the feeling which moves it. They love also, they love as they are loved, with their whole heart, and their felicity is in proportion to their love.

Love never perishes. "I can no longer pray," murmured a dying man; "but I can still love." And thus, loving and loved, he went full of joy to cross the threshold of his eternal abode. Let us love, and we shall be happy. Our best hours here below have been hours of affection. A vast atmosphere of love surrounds the children of God on every side: their brethren love them, the angels love them,

the great family of heaven love them, God loves them, we know how well !

Let me give you here, dear friends, one of the finest definitions of this love, without which there is no happiness. To love is to give one's self to others and to become detached from self. — Yes, to renounce himself, to weary himself, to seek his magnet elsewhere. Oh, what a change! and without it, how could peace dwell within us! Selfishness would put it to flight. So long as our self continues to reign, so long as we study ourself, as we see ourself in every thing, as we are our highest, or, rather sole, end, shameful passions — anger, envy, suspicion, pride, bitterness, discord — will not cease to destroy our peace.

Here is an idol to be broken. The last idol, that which remains standing when all the rest have fallen,—this last idol is ourself. When we shall be delivered from ourself, we shall begin (and not before) to comprehend the saying, “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.” The heart and the mind—it is important that these two powers of our soul should be equally pacified. Let them both become submissive, and humility comes, and with it meekness, that great precursor of hap-

piness. From this moment, the "roots of bitterness" cease to put forth and to occasion disturbance. We have given ourselves, we belong to another, we live in God.

And then we begin to live on the earth as "pilgrims and strangers." We have no longer our country here below, but in heaven; we must, indeed, have it somewhere. We journey through the present life on our way to another place, the great rendezvous whither so many loved ones have preceded us. We enjoy the blessings which God places in our way; but we enjoy them in him, and as if already seated in the heavenly places. Our treasure and happiness are on high.

We must go very high, let us not forget, to seize happiness. We always seek it too low. The anchor of the soul takes hold only on the shores of eternity, beyond the earth. There, there alone, are all the true means found united, — truth, holiness, and peace.

And here we will pause, dear friends. I will keep my word and, remaining on earth, accept to the end the terms of our problem as propounded by the Preacher. The subject is already quite vast enough, and we have had

difficulty in surveying it. We will therefore leave that other subject, also so vast, so seductive and so beautiful,—happiness in the life to come. It is enough for us to have shown it in this life.

Do two kinds of happiness, moreover, exist? Does not eternity begin here below? Ah! I well know the difference. All the sin which remains among the children of God will have disappeared, and with sin, suffering. Where sin does not enter, suffering can not come; thenceforth death is no more, nor night, nor mourning, nor tears. God himself will wipe them from our eyes. Thus, even unto the life without end will be verified the great maxim which has served as the thread of our researches,—unhappiness through rebellion, happiness through holiness.

VI.

APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT.

AND now I turn to you, to ourselves, and what I attempted last Sunday, re-commence with more firmness to-day. Let us make a personal examination of ourselves in the point of view of happiness.

To judge better of what we lack, I have re-read, in part, at least, that book of the Bible which seems to be specially commissioned to express joy (with grief), to celebrate the blessings of God, to give scope to gratitude, to offer sacrifices of praise.—You all name the Psalms.

In perusing them, I have examined the close relations which exist between gratitude and happiness as between murmuring and suffering, and have said to myself, Never, perhaps, have we been further from the Spirit which inclines us to praise God, to “sing to him with a light heart,” to celebrate his lofty deeds, to admire his works, to take the cup of deliverance, and to exclaim, with hearts overflowing with

happiness, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

Remember these songs, so beautiful that it suffices to cite a few words to recall them entire to the memory of Christians.

"There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say,—if it had not been the Lord, then they had swallowed us up quick."

"My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly."

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold

the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."

We can not hear such accents, we can not re-peruse the story, always the same yet always new, of death and life, of condemnation and pardon, the drama of Psalm cvii., the radiant strophes of Psalm xxiii., without envying the happiness of those who draw near to God, "mighty in gladness," and who "know what it is to utter shouts of rejoicing."

Do we know this? Is our soul lodged in the midst of blessings? Do we look forward to Him "who will finish what concerns us?"

Are we happy? This is the most important of all questions; after this, however, Are we unhappy?—Ah! we must begin with this; and, if it has pleased God to bless our discourses, one of the best results of these meditations on happiness will be that many among us will retire unhappy; many will be inspired with pity for the mournful enjoyments with which they were formerly contented; many will feel their misery.

But we, dear friends, we who have already known, in a feeble measure at least, the crushing weight of the law and the joys of grace, are we happy? In asking this, I seem to ask, Are we Christians? This is a grave matter, and I could not forgive myself for having agitated questions without having agitated consciences. All study must end in this.

We are now at the heart of the question. Let us interrogate our hearts. Are we tranquil? Do we lack nothing? Do we fear nothing? While mourning our trials and sins, do we possess the sweet assurance that God is with us? Would we be willing to die as we are?

If there are any happy here, the sight alone of their felicity will do much more toward converting souls than my poor words can do. I am of Luther's opinion that *doers* are worth more than *sayers*. Powerful doers are those happy Christians (happy perhaps in tears) who manifest in the sight of all the miracle of miracles, the miracle which no magician of Egypt ever imitated, — true happiness on earth.

It is written, "The light of the righteous rejoiceth." And elsewhere, "The joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." — Nothing resounds so far as joy; the world, astonished

to hear such sounds, asks immediately whence they can come. As it likes to persuade itself that the life of saints is sad and disagreeable, all its prejudices are shaken on the day that it begins to suspect that they alone are happy here below.

Among the apologies for Christianity, those which act most powerfully to-day are those which show its marvelous adaptation to the deep needs of our heart. Now among these needs, which is at once deeper, more legitimate, and more universally felt, than the need of happiness? This religion is true, which brings joy, a joy impregnated with holiness; this religion is true, which answers to our distresses, and which could not disappear without leaving the world, as we have seen, a prey to misery beyond remedy.

I refrain from adding a single word. Christians, what do your consciences pronounce? With respect to happiness, are you what you ought to be, are you contented with yourselves? Take care; the point in question is the advancement of the gospel around you, not to say within you; for, if we deprive the world of this great apology for happiness, we also de-

prive ourselves of it, and our faith in feeling itself more joyful would certainly become strengthened. There is here an internal demonstration which nothing can replace.

Let us banish then, by the aid of the Lord, the obstacles within and without, the wearied and morose habits, the lugubrious and tearful tone, and the repining disposition which fetter at once the conversion of unbelievers and the progress of believers. There is such grace and beauty in enjoying much! Give us lovely Christians, we are in need of them.

Or rather, O Lord, give us to them. We need happy men; make us saints. Let us know at last both the youth which defies years and the enthusiasm which passes through the sorrows, the falls, the mistakes, and the inevitable lassitude, of life without becoming extinct! Repeat in our ears the penetrating words of the Canticles, those words of love, of resurrection, of Spring, which should be read to-day, at the hour when all nature seems to put on her new attire: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

